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280. c. 29.

MARGARET;

OR,

THE MOTHERLESS.

MARGARET;

OR,

THE MOTHERLESS.

BY

MRS. PFEIFFER,

AUTHOR OF

"VALLISNERIA."

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."—*Rev. ii.* 7.

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1861.

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TO

The Memory of her

MOTHER,

THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

MARGARET;

OR,

THE MOTHERLESS.

THO' from that land I come
  Where the shades of things gone by,
Mix a soft and twilight gloom
  With the brightness that is nigh;
No story all o'erwrought
  With the pomp of olden time,
Grows tuneful in my thought,
  Till it quickens into rhyme.

No, I know not what is on me
  That a tale of yesterday,
With its earnest truth hath won me
  From all other thoughts away;

No tale of knightly deed,
Of Paynim wile or rage,
I but rede you a true rede
Of the careful world's old age.

Born to no home of love wert thou,
Margaret, but in this iron time
Cam'st lonely into life, as tho'
Thou wert a sprite of olden rhyme.
Of mother-love thou hast not known
More than the fabled Lorelei,
Who sits aloft upon her throne
Betwixt the deep Rhine and the sky.
No waiting hearts were turn'd towards thee
Expectantly; no conscious glow
Of pride in first maternity
E'er brightened on thy mother's brow;
But when thy voice was heard in weeping
She turned on thee one pitying look,
Then laid her down, and deeply sleeping,
All else for love of *one* forsook:—
Thy pleading voice that bade her stay,
That other's calling from above—
Her feeble thread of life gave way,
Divided by a twofold love.

Then wert thou claim'd, but straightway cast
  Upon another, nothing kin
To thee, or those whose careless past
  Weigh'd on thy sinless head as sin;
I know not even if the hand
  That foster'd thee was wholly pure,
Or if the kindly, new-form'd band
  In love alone had been secure;
I think there was some base alloy,
  But thou wert car'd for, and some years
Wert cherish'd as a wondrous toy,
  That smil'd bright smiles, and wept warm tears.

There came a day, as time wore on,
  That changed thy destiny awhile;
Fresher air and brighter sun,
  Nature's kind and fost'ring smile—
Were the means thy guardian sought
  To make of thee a woman ruddy,
Fair and smooth of skin—much thought
  She had given to the study.
True is it that the white o'ercame
  The red rose on the childish cheek,
When first the soul untaught would frame
  The large deep thoughts it could not speak;

And that the busy mind like yeast
That work'd and leaven'd all about,
Too much disturbed fair Julia's rest
With ceaseless questions, strife, and doubt.
And haply, too, the childish grace
Which had engag'd that light, vain mind,
Was something chasten'd, and gave place
To charms more subtle and refin'd;
And losing thus the heedless, bold,
But bashful still, and playful child,
Slight cause made Julia loose her hold
On the pale girl so sad and mild.

'Tis blithe to watch upon the lea
The sun from his night couch arise,
And bathe his glories in a sea
Of mist before he mounts the skies;
And blithe to hear the lark in May,
As, cleaving through the clouds to meet him,—
The uprous'd Giant of the Day,—
He spends his heart in songs to greet him.

And glad the time when, gather'd round
The morning meal, each simple heart,
On track of daily duty bound,
Tastes of his life the poet's part;
When fond illusion runs its length,
And brains unskilled in verse or trope,
Still measure toil with morning strength,
And modest gain with morning hope.

And very sweet it is at noon
To lie upon the scented grass,
And rest your dazzled eyes upon
The cool cloud shadows as they pass;
To listen to the busy bee,
And inly to yourself confess
The while he plies from flow'r to tree,—
The luxury of idleness.

And good to watch the summer flowers
Grow languid in the fervid gaze
Of the bold sun, and sparkling showers
Descend without or cloud or haze
To herald them; like those sweet tears
Which 'neath the trembling lids distil,
Not born of sorrow or of fears,
But of a transport keener still.

And then how dreamy is the hour
When length'ning shadows on the green
Give something more of soul, and power,
And pathos to the placid scene;
When toil-worn men, subdued and bent,
Plod onward to a home of rest,
Too weary not to be content,
And too faint-hearted to be blest.

Peaceful to hear the lowing kine,
And cool to tread the shady ground,
And sweet to scent the wild woodbine
Whose hiding place the dew has found;
And good to look where far away
Behind the hills the sun goes down,
And think that other lands have day
When light and day have left our own.

All this had Margaret felt and seen
In her new home, if home might be
Where dwelt no heart on whom to lean
Her individuality
In its great weakness; this she felt,
And saw that all was good and glad;
But in her lonely heart, where dwelt
Her secret thoughts, the child was sad.

And sadder is she when there sweep
  Still deeper shades o'er all of these,
And cottage homes do seem to creep
  And fade away beneath the trees;
And humble hearths are still and cold,
  And all of human life is sleeping,
'Tis then that darker fancies hold
  The child her lonely vigils keeping.

She had known night in cities, where
  It falls not thus so silent down,
Where the last sounds which fill the air
  At eve are echoed by the morn;
Where she had seem'd not so alone
  Under the cold gaze of the stars,
But merg'd into that mighty One
  Of countless human hopes and jars.

But saddest was she when she trod
  With quiet step the graveyard way,
And saw the last home in the sod
  Of so much unrecorded clay;
I know not what of spirits' strife
  Shook her young heart and made her weep,
In thinking of the toilsome life
  Thus "rounded by" its silent sleep.

She stood upon life's threshold and was weary,
But other hopes were striving in her breast,
She said to one who taught her, "Madam, fear ye
To think on what in heaven do the blest?
Shall I see my mother there? And will she love me
As mothers love? And will the dizzy height
Spread in eternal light and change above me?
And shall I too be ever good and bright?
Shall my hair be golden, and my cheeks again
Be rosy as they were *when I was young?*
Shall all faces be as pictures, and all pain
Be banish'd from our natures with all wrong?
Or if it lingers still, like—like the sigh
Which bears the odours of a summer noon,
Shall we not sing it out in strains so high,
In untaught numbers, and such goodly tune,
That we shall bless it for the sweets which flow
From out it? Madam, will it not be so?"

The dame looked gravely down, and answer'd "No!
In heaven above is only one belov'd,
And only one immortal strain will flow
From saintly lips which have been tried and prov'd
In sorrow here; Hosannah is that song,
Hosannah to the Highest, still the same

By day, by night, from all the heav'nly throng,
Hosannah and Hosannah!" said the dame,
"And every child who hath been good and wise
On earth shall sing Hosannah in the skies!"

But Margaret sigh'd not soon to die for this,
And her defeated soul sunk down to earth,
Back from such visions of celestial bliss,
Above her wishes as beyond her worth.
She sicken'd when she thought how far away
From God and all things holy she must be,
When thus she shrunk from His eternal day,
Prefigur'd in such bright monotony.
But here she felt the dreary aimlessness
Still present, which had weigh'd upon her soul,
Her vivid soul—that knew no happiness
But to press ever onward to some goal.
And none were near who from the word could draw
The spirit, and could tell her that reveal'd
In her own being was a steadfast law
Of God and nature, not to be repeal'd;
She often ponder'd what the dame had said,
And from this time she trembled more in bed.

So many and many a time the swallows went,
And came and went again beneath the eaves
Of the old house, whose darkling shadow bent
Above young Margaret's spirit; with the leaves,
The fruit, the sunshine, and the autumn flow'rs,
They went, for swallows are but summer friends,
Light'ning the swift, the golden winged hours,
But for their transit off'ring no amends.

No matter now, they flitted to and fro
For many a season, and in many a spring
The good-man at the farm went forth to sow
The seed in earth, with faith that time would bring
A transformation into fuller life;
And many a time the affluent earth had spread
Her table, and with corn-sheaves full and rife
Had groaning stood beneath a people's bread.

And many a time the woodlands' netted maze
Had stood forth in a beading of green gems,
Which many a time in driving autumn days,
Wither'd from off inhospitable stems,
Had pour'd and patter'd by in russet showers;
And many a time the red musk rose that grew
In Margaret's garden had put forth its flowers
Beneath her watching eyes, so soft and true.

Nine years, yes nine, are number'd in the leaves
Which from her favourite rose the girl has gather'd,
And which a quaintly-fashioned jar receives,
All "In Memoriam" variously wither'd.
There as they lie, embalm'd in fragrant state,
With spices in their trim depository,
What happened in their day they may narrate,
And with it much of Margaret's simple story.

For she had rarely wander'd far beyond
The dark old house with swallows in its eaves,
The garden, and the village church, and pond,
And shadowy green; and so like wither'd leaves
Which drop down silent after rain, the years
Had past in dreary quietude, and fell
Sodden upon a waste of childish tears,
With scarce a record in their muffled knell.

The surging tides of time which gird about
The whole wide earth, and in their ebb and flow
Make seasons, faithful were in change no doubt;
But Margaret called upon those tides to throw
Some wonder at her feet, meant, made for *her*,
Some turn of Fate which, like a twisted shell,
Curious in convolutions, should refer
To her alone in all it had to tell.

But lonely still the child grew on, o'erlook'd
By destiny, and one, who all unmeet
For such an office, would as ill have brook'd
The guidance of such chancelating feet
On the rough road of life, as the good dame—
The farmer's homespun wife—who, stern and narrow,
Went round a mill of duties still the same,
Hard, grinding, eating into soul and marrow.

True is it that the iron-tinted grey
Of the goodwife's so neatly-banded hair
Still faded on the temple where it lay;
And that the goodman left his easy chair
Less often now than in the days byegone;
And that pale Margaret, as she past about
The garden, drew a longer shadow on;
But things like these unheeded will fall out

From the closed hand of Fate, and did not stir
That pool of life so ominously still,
Which mirror'd all too faithfully for her
An inner being strong for good or ill—
A being which of its own self could show
A world of change, with promptings warm and leal,
Which quick to fancy, and athirst to know,
Possess'd that richest heritage—to *feel.*

Oh, never all of gloom is any lot
Where this choice boon abundantly is given!
Prophetic is it, deeply hinting what
May be, from that for which the soul has striven;
Thus Margaret when on violets she lay
In spring, would taste a rapture so intense
That she would deem—fading in dreams away—
Their perfume did instruct some inner sense—

To tell her of the beautiful in store
For her in gladsome, golden days to come,
To hold as in a mirage out before
Her desert heart the picture of some home,
Which love should light up through the longest night,
And warm throughout the chillest winter day,
Where both should pass in ever new delight,
And pass—but never seem to pass away.

Thus lonely had she ripen'd into youth.
It was the middle of the Christian year,
And Margaret knelt where she was told "the truth"
Was weekly dealt out crystalline and clear
To all who came; she knelt in church, beside
The goodman and his wife, perchance in face,
Her book—her mother's once—was open wide
At Trinity, as if it knew the place.

I know not, had you seen her as she knelt,
That you had call'd her beautiful; the girls
With many-coloured ribbons madly blent,
There sitting in the aisle, with jetty curls
And glowing cheeks, had taken many eyes;
But not one glance of all had turn'd that way
Where Margaret followed with her low replies
The rubric, and intently strove to pray.

The prayers were over, and the people rose,
And Margaret, slight and tall, and somewhat bent,
Like a young leaf which doth not yet disclose
Its full proportions—rose with them and lent
A sweet, still childish voice, to swell the strain
Of rustic singers, hautboy, and bassoon;
Then had you turn'd your eyes that way again
You would have blest their light that Sabbath noon.

For she *was* beautiful as so she stood
Singing, and with her wonderful brown eyes
Now bright, now quench'd as in a wavy flood
Of young emotion, which had had its rise
In the rude strains from which the town-bred squire
Turns laughing; but he lacks her finer sense,—
A mind all order, and a soul all fire,—
To charm the spirit of their beauty thence.

By Julia and by stirring accidents
The girl had been forgotten, but not so
By Nature, who had work'd out her intents
Here in the quiet village, with a slow
And persevering cunning; she had wrought
By heart, and chisell'd out a form and face
Of which no type could have been found if sought
For generations in this far-off place.

Hers was a mould most delicate and rare,
With something of caprice in its fine lines;
Not form'd for strife with nature, soft and fair,
But nerv'd with latent strength, whose present signs
Were movements half impetuous; she had eyes—
'Twas not enough to say that they could speak,
They seem'd to *talk* and to await replies,
And with their large dilating pupils, break

Through all the cold restraints of voice and mien
Which her ungenial training had induced,
And make their sweet amends—by her unseen—
For the mute watch to which her tongue was used.
Harmonious were her other lineaments,
Not with the harmony which seeks to mate
The equal strength of many instruments,
But as low chords that on twin voices wait.

And yet I know not had you seen her there,
The glow of exaltation pass'd away,
That you had call'd her beautiful; her hair
Was rather light than dark, a golden ray
Warmed it as of the sun in his decline;
She was so wan you could not choose but think
Of a snow mountain with a crown of pine,
Where parting sunbeams gather ere they sink.

Yet not of evening had you thought, but dawn,
In gazing on the twilight of that face,
Held the bright locks as earnest of a morn,
Of splendour, and a cycle of fair days.
For time and genial circumstance would show
How the rich element in her young blood
Which gilded them, on cheek and lip could glow,
Transfiguring all her being in its flood.

The blessing had been said, and Margaret mov'd—
A shadow clad in sable—through the throng;
For she, the lady who had erst reproved
The child's aspirings, had begun her song,
And if of proof her creed had stood the test,
Was reaping the reward of just endeavour,
And singing in a chorus of the Blest,
The changeless theme that should endure for ever.

Much talk was there among the simple folk
Of how the parson had improv'd upon
His theme, how light he made the Christian yoke,—
How easy,—being borne by faith alone.
And this in sooth was true for them—their days
Were sober twisted threads of toil and rest;
They asked no better, for the straightest ways
Did to their barren natures seem the best.

They garner good where quicker souls find ill;
Their weakness stands to them in place of strength;
Their frozen fancies turn not from the chill,
Their patient dulness shrinks not from the length;
They want not wisdom they can never need,
Or beauty which has never learnt to please;
But are they all the lambs there are to feed?
Are temples only made for such as these?

What call is this to minds that love to labour?
"Come, see me glean the corn, and press the wine;
Have faith in God and me, love for your neighbour,
But of these two faith only is divine.
So hold by faith. Truth we do hold suspect;
We would be humble, and find out what seems
To us the best and fittest, and reject
From Providence all law but our own dreams."

Pass on by Margaret's side. Who gather there
  Beneath the sign that swings from yon old tree?
What fumes are these which load the Sabbath air?
  What rude-pitch'd voices and loud revelry?
The outcasts these of cold, unlovely creeds,
  Or lovely creeds with cold interpreters;
The men of quicker pulse and larger needs,
  The men whom force repels, and pleasure stirs;

All men of little virtue if you will,
  But barren not of good in fitful gleams;
The poor relations they of those who fill
  Our halls with music and with pictur'd dreams.
Blind, erring, weak they are, but is it good
  To make the ways of pleasantness and peace
Too thorny for such wayward feet, and should
  They be alone unaided in the race?

Now Margaret sits beside the window-seat
  At home—the window which looks dimly out
Upon the garden, and its trees which meet
  And hide the distant hills; and reads about
The "Pilgrims" and their "Progress," and she sighs
  To think that in her day the promis'd land
Was not to be contested in this wise,
  In changeful tracts, but in a dreary stand.

Of fiction 'twas the only book she knew;
And when her red musk-rose had shed its flow'rs,
Had bloom'd and shed them, bloom'd and shed a few
Once more, she sat again in the small hours
Of a still afternoon in Trinity,
And read, upon the self-same spot, the same
Old story—how Despair was made to flee,
How Mercy trembling went and Greatheart came.

And so the rose leaves in the porcelain jar
Had chronicles to keep of two more years;
The corner clock had warn'd, it was not far
From striking; few its warnings for her ears
In future; even now as she sits there
A letter comes from Julia, which will be
The herald of another life. Beware!
She reads it as the warning clock strikes three.

Julia has "failing health," she "thinks to spend
The winter in a warmer climate, and
Would share the pleasure with her youthful friend;"
She is her guardian, and her words command.
But force were little needed; Margaret gave
Some soft regrets to things gone by, her breath
Came quick, and then she rose up glad and brave,
Before her all is life, behind her—death.

She took a cutting from her sweet musk-rose;
  She pack'd its hoarded leaves with pious care;
Nor e'en the dame's cold formalism froze
  The fount of feeling now. How often bare
And shy and fearful, and with a stern sense
  Of beggary, had she, poor heart! shrunk back
From Margaret's rich emotions. Child, go hence,
  This time precede the swallows on their track.

Julia was light as any tendril curl
  Which cast its trembling shade upon her brow,
And with that shade a doubt, if Time—the churl!—
  Had wrought there on his own account ere now.
Julia had beauty still, enough to make
  Her protest against Time the more pathetic;
Was gay and graceful, kind for kindness' sake,
  Given to change, loquacious and æsthetic.

She had a mind which, like her curls, was rock'd,
  But never rudely shaken by life's breezes;
She lov'd Italian cities, where she stock'd
  That mind with ghosts of pedestals and friezes;
Classic remains unclassified, which haunted
  Her brain thereafter like the curious ware
In a Jew's shop, which no one ever wanted,
  Which came from, and which went to—heav'n
    knows where!

She lov'd all art and artists; those the best
  Who in their art-humility became
As little children, who are first possessed
  Of imitative longings, when the same
Make hieroglyphs of poor humanity
  On slates; and if the childhood thus return'd to
At best were but the second, 'twere profanity
  To draw them from the innocence they yearn'd to.

She lov'd all men of letters, and of note,
  All natural sciences, and oh! far more,
All preter-natural; she seldom wrote,
  Her spelling was not perfect, but she wore
Her various knowledge with a sapient grace;
  For pictures, poodles, porcelain, and what may,
For Venice glasses, and for Flanders lace,
  Julia declar'd that she was "*passionée.*"

And thus she—well acquainted among those
Who travel, or for idleness or pleasure,
Or profit or convenience, or, who knows?
For prudence—found herself, within a measure,
The well-pleas'd centre of a motley group
Of artists and musicians, strange and native,
Republicans and poets—a wild troup
Of Geniuses deductive and creative.

Destructive and creative was the turn
Which Julia gave with nice discrimination
To this set phrase—but, sooth to say, we learn
She meant no malice in this free translation;
It was her easy way—a butterfly
That found not in Love's garden what she sought,
She spread her airy wings, resolv'd to try
The uninclos'd and fertile fields of Thought.

Julia upon her staff was pleas'd to show
A goodly force of Germans from all parts,
Of sizes most unequal, high and low,
And square and slim, all wedded to the arts.
With beard and hair symbolic or fantastic,
Cut *à la mode de* Düsseldorf or Munich,
With thoughtful eyes, speech earnest and bombastic,
And kindly hearts worn over coat and tunic,

Or blouse,—I have been tempted by the rhyme,—
What I would say is, that our German brothers,
In their simplicity, take little time
To know and to be known, compar'd with others.
Your Englishman you know thro' faith and patience,
Your Frenchman off and on at his good pleasure,
Your Rhinelander at once in trains, at stations,
And never it may be in fullest measure

Your soft Italian, simple as a child,
And wily as a woman who makes boast,
And draws a profit sensible, if mild,
From her own weakness. Julia at her post
Had rallied round her some of each of these.
Frenchmen who came so learned from the schools
That they but measur'd cornice, plinth, or frieze
To test their work by academic rules;

And Englishmen who spurn'd at all indentures,
And loving Nature with an unwise love,
Show'd up her accidents and misadventures,
Her failings and shortcomings, and so strove
To prove her lawless as themselves, and turn'd
Back to the time, for their sectarian ends,
Before her code had yet been fully learn'd.
Poor Nature! God protect her from her friends!

'Twas in a mouldering palace, most ornate,
Not over clean, tho' pompous in pretension,
That Julia sate, and kept her little state;
And here perhaps it were as well to mention
That tho' we find her free to roam at will,
She had been wed and widow'd twice; Time rolls,
And all of this sad Past which linger'd still
Was twenty thousand pounds in the Consols.

On one of those world-famous seven hills
The palace stood: and 'mid its fading splendor,
Its mildew and its mould, its damps and chills,
As Margaret glided light, and pale, and slender,
Awakening echoes in the gaunt stair-cases
And chambers, which look'd scorn from wall to ceil-
On our small modern uses, quips, and graces,—[ing,
Echoes scarce louder than the frescoes peeling,

And falling feebly, intermitting, slow,
Like to the pulse of age—thus as she went
And glided in and out, and to and fro,
She felt so small before the vast extent
Of that great Past,—the still advancing tide
Of that great Future which these walls might
Her brief existence seem'd to stand aside, [see,—
The Past and Future seem'd more real than she.

She had been early us'd on dreams to feed
Her hungry fancy, and had not yet learn'd
To lay aside the habit with the need.
Now, as in those young days when she had yearn'd
For company and kindred, her quick thought
But rarely cloth'd itself in words, and so
The changes which these later days had wrought
But lit her eyes up with a livelier glow.

As Julia had been in the past, so now,
Her words and ways with kindness were replete;
She smooth'd the chestnut braids on Margaret's brow,
She kiss'd her cheek, and call'd her "*chère petite*,"
She furnish'd from her stores the pretty gauds
Which women love, and Julia more in truth
Than with her grave pretensions well accords;
Margaret was happy in her hopes and youth.

Happy, and yet the life she liv'd was strange:
Dropp'd in the midst of all this hurtling crowd,
Of thoughts and fancies, all this world of change
And movement; feeling—for she was endow'd
With pow'rs like divination—that here first
She mix'd with those who thought life more than
The body more than raiment, and that thirst [bread,
And hunger might be felt by souls unfed.

Seeing and feeling this, rejoicing in it,
It made her days more dreamlike still appear;
For free herself, her tongue, like a caged linnet,
Knew but one note, and could not sing that here;
Her native language, spoken with a grace
Exceeding, was the only speech she knew,
And those of Julia's circle in this place
Who understood its meaning, still were few.

'Mid all the undistinguishable waves
Of sound which smote on Margaret's ear, one word,
A proper name, alone her memory saves
From out the chaos; very often heard,
In tones of deep respect or grave comment,
This name is "Albrecht," and she seeks for one
Who bears it, with a strange persistence bent
On finding him; she fails, for there is none.

Still Albrecht, and still Albrecht; that name floats
Upon the surface of all talk; erewhile
She learns that he is looked for here, and notes
That they are Germans who do thus beguile
Their time in waiting. Like a woman she
From this one living centre works her way,
Makes this word with its fellow word agree,
And something knows erelong of all they say.

But this was not enough; her captive soul
Which so drew in the inner sense of things,
Had need of issues—words that burn and roll
Like flame from lips or pen, or those strong wings
Of thought which spread themselves on canvas, or
Which mount in music; but it so had chanced
She had not learnt their use; she heard, and saw,
And felt, but for the moment only—danced!

Yes, Margaret danced; the trick of step and figure
Untried before this time, she soon had learn'd
From Julia, since the cold ascetic rigour
In which she had been train'd, such arts had spurn'd.
She danced, as dance all creatures young and free,
The little lambs rejoicing in the spring,
The fawns which, light as bubbles in their glee,
Bound o'er the Highland fern in sportive fling;

The unkempt colts, on frantic gambol bent,
Which spurn the earth, and lash themselves along
With eager tails; the lark in her ascent
That beats her wings in measure to her song;
The kitten in her airy waltz around
Some bauble on the floor, or when she tries
Her *pas de Fascination*, and rebound,
All these are Nature's teachers, far more wise

Than those dull pedants who would fain confine
The warm, fermenting blood of youth within
Some narrow compass squared by rule and line,
And exercise themselves by making sin.
So Margaret danced; it was with her the spring;
The sap of her young life in its quintessence
Began to move within her, and to bring
Her being altogether to florescence.

She danced, and so forgot she could not speak;
She danced, and rend'ring thus the sounds she loved
From music into motion, seem'd to break
The double spell of silence as she moved.
She danced, and floating on as in a dream,
Her soul became foreseeing, and she caught
Wild visions of a joy unknown, supreme, [fraught.
With which the coming time seem'd vaguely

She danced, and those who watch'd her in the throng
Said that she threw off sparks as she pass'd by;
And he who guided her swift steps along,—
Saw the lips parted, and the gleaming eye,—
Read secrets which those parted, silent lips
If speaking had kept back with stern repression:
—When Margaret dances, 'tis a soul which slips
Its bonds, and triumphs in unique expression.

One evening in the chill month of December—
With them it was an Indian summer, warm
As June—the windows, as I well remember,
Were open, and the passage of a storm
Far off on the horizon to the west,
Disturb'd the air, and thro' the rustling blinds
Show'd Nature's face just waking from her rest,
And answ'ring half in sleep the whisp'ring winds.

The oleander, one that Margaret loved,
And which had yielded up the flowery spray
Now twisted in her hair, was strangely moved;
Turning its branches from the moon away,
It thrice against the window as she past [warm,
Knock'd with its shadowy fingers; flush'd and
Margaret stood still, and listen'd at the last
As it had brought a message from the storm.

And list'ning thus to that fantastic call,
Alive and sentient, with a life apart
From all the lives about her, voices fall
Upon her ear unheard; till, with a start,
She turns, she scarce knows why; her glowing face
Confronts a face as marble calm and cold;
She looks, her eyes dilate, then back one pace
She steps, and falters "Albrecht." None had told

The stranger's name, or told it when her ear
Had been intent on other sounds, but she
Had taken observations; sharp and clear,
She had some bearings of his soul,—for he
Was known and talk'd of much, as has been told;
And, working from the kernel to the shell,
Like Nature's self, had struck the fleshly mould
So true, that seeing him she knew him well.

And yet the stranger's outward man was one
Best render'd by negations; he was not
Or tall or short, or dark or fair, a son
Of central Europe; one whose loftier lot—
The higher still the bleaker—nipp'd severely
The frank expansion native to the soil;
A face almost without a fault, and nearly
Without a charm, might be the cold recoil.

But Margaret judg'd not thus; the quiet gaze
Which seem'd to read the soul she would have felt
Too brightly lighted, had she dared to raise
Her eyes,—that gaze so motionless, which dwelt
Upon her face as if that face had been
An outwork to a fort of some strange nation,
Which might be one of foes,—that gaze so keen
To her at least seem'd full of provocation.

She shook herself with a strong effort free
From a vague sense of fear and helplessness,
And met his gaze with one where he must see
The ready pride which came to her redress.
He smiled a scarce distinguishable smile,
And bowing low, as kings and courtiers bow,
Addressed her in her native tongue; meanwhile
Her sudden anger went, she knew not how.

They stood and talked beside the window, where
A shaft of moonlight made a milky way,
So that while on his quiet face the glare
Of candles shone, on hers the pearly ray.
And from this time that name of small pretence
Was whisper'd, spoken, canvassed everywhere,
While that cold presence, coming none said whence,
Made a strange stir and current in the air.

He was no painter, that seem'd evident;
His dress, so scrupulous without caprice,
Might have been worn throughout the continent
Without a comment; yet they did not cease—
His artist countrymen—to court his praise,
To beg his suffrage for their works, as if
His breath made reputations, and could raise
Or blow the bubbles out with one light whiff.

And Margaret saw him daily, as he came
  And went; and in the current of her life
There was a stir and movement too, the same
  Yet not the same as that she saw so rife
In others; 'twas as if some turbid flood
  Had made irruption in a quiet lake;
Her being mounted to its flux, her blood
  Into a thousand wavelets seem'd to break.

And standing near her tiring glass one night,
  The banded tresses of her hair unroll'd,
Making a royal mantle, all bedight
  With waves of changing silk, with crests of gold,
She sees her image; and her kindling eyes,
  Flush'd cheek, quick breath, and movements, each,
The impress of that first and sweet surprise [all share
  She feels on finding that she is so fair.

And is it true that love is even so
  The sun and centre of the universe,
That standing not within its sacred glow
  We see but shades of things which be, or worse?
And is it not alone our human brother
  Who can be known by love, and love alone,
But stand we too in darkness, if none other
  Show us our self by flashes from his own?

Twas so with Margaret; she had never found
Or sought for beauty in an unlov'd face;
But once beloved, a thousand charms draw round
To justify the title which they grace.
For tho' no spoken words had wak'd as yet
Wild echoes in the chambers of her soul,
A silence thrilled there, as when crowds are met
And gaze in expectation towards one goal.

She never said, "This man shall be my slave"—
She had not thought that such could ever be;
She never watched that face so calm and grave,
And dreamed, "He may be dreaming now of me."
But a warm shaft had struck her from that sun
Of souls, and, as in beams of common light,
The fiery atoms dance, her spirits spun
As heedless in their strange and new delight.

But while she only lived, he loved and thought,
Loved as he could, and thought, as men will think,
When problems by a stubborn will are brought
To match with counter problems, and to link.
It had been thus for days, for weeks—they kept
No note of time—when from her chamber she
Came singing forth one morn, and gaily swept
Adown the stairs, no bird more light or free.

She paused upon a note; the broken stave
Was never mended; turning sharply round
As turned the steps, she met that face so grave
Awaiting her, drawn hither by the sound.
He had but now left Julia; she had heard
The closing door divide them; he is pale;
She trembles—she, the light and careless bird;
She tries to greet him, but her accents fail.

'Tis he who speaks; his words are eager, low,
Breathless, while with a clasp as soft as sure,
He draws her hence where he would have her go,
Through the closed curtains of that open door.
He leads her to the window, pauses there,
Takes in his own the hands which fear has made
So cold, and with his hopes would fain compare
The secret which her drooping eyelids shade.

Again he speaks, the same brief words again,
Scarcely articulate, but eloquent
Of that strong travail of a heart in pain
Of living love; and towards her as he bent
She raised her head, let fall her folded hands,
And, shaking off the mist of idle dreams,
Knows that in Love's high presence first she stands,
The only thing that is the thing it seems!

And looking up she sees the once cold face
Transfigur'd, and the speculating eyes
Glowing as if some lambent, inward blaze
Shone through them; and so taken by surprise,
She lost possession of herself, and knew
No longer his emotions from her own;
The spark had kindled, and the rosy hue
Of passion compass'd both as in one zone.

For Albrecht loved her; say he loved her not
So well but that exceptions might be made,
But loved her as it is the common lot
Of women to be loved: for charms that fade,—
For cheeks, eyes, lips, that fade and never feel,—
No matter what, love is, or turns to, good:
To fuse the virgin ore, and press his seal
On that pure heart he would have coined his blood.

He had said all; nothing, and yet enough;
It was her turn, he paused that she might speak;
The proud man knelt; no democrat so rough
A leveller as love; his accents break
The stillness as he falters yet again, [hands
"Margaret, you love me?" And she lays her
Upon his hands, and them in one quick strain
Upon her heart, loud beating as she stands.

She looks at him with wild, transparent eyes;
"I know not—*do* I love you? You who know
What love may be?" And he, enraptured, cries,
"Yes, yes, you love me, love must look just so!"
She leaned against the window-frame, and sought
Still in his face with fix'd and wistful gaze
Some answer to her swift, cloud-gathering thought,
Some clue to guide her soul through all this maze.

"Yes, yes," he said, supreme in dauntless faith,
"You love me, else what stirs this fluttering heart?
Why mounts this pulse? What hurries thus your [breath?
You love me, Margaret; of my life a part
You must become, my wife, my love, my pride;
Your guardian, she will tell how I have fought
To raise you, fairest lily, to my side—
How set the Dragon, Prejudice, at nought.

"Yes, she will better tell you at what cost
I am content to win the hand I hold."
He kissed its burning palm, then swiftly cross'd
The chamber; turning at the door, he told
Her once again from Julia's lips to glean
More fully what he only had let fall
In scatter'd hints, whose drift perchance had been
Uncaught by her; then past into the hall.

One moment in that place she stood alone,
Perplexed and giddy in a sea of doubt;
Till spicy odours through the window blown
Recalled her to the living world without;
She look'd abroad, and saw how in the sun
The gilly-flower was burning on the wall;
And feeling still her fluttering heart, as one [all?"
Who counts its throbs, she sighed, "and is this

Some faltering steps soon brought her to the room
Near by, where Julia paced the floor, and waited
Impatient in the very flush and bloom
Of her surprise,—excited and elated.
With open arms, and ready smiles and tears,
All pressed into the service of her joy,
She smothered Margaret's struggling doubts and
And made the puzzle of her soul a toy, [fears,

Which should be put together so, and so,—
According to the pattern on the lid;—
She said not much, but trusted to the flow
Of circumstance,—a will that over-rid
All that opposed it, and but told her now,
How he who loved her, sate upon a throne—
A sovereign prince, and wore upon his brow
A diadem which would not bind her own.

Further, that this rare love was of the things
Which, scared by our hard, civilizing ways,
Had perished out, or haply spread their wings
In distant flight; and, sounding still his praise,
She showed how he had sworn to place her where
He yearned to have her, and, like some true knight,
To levy homage for the bride so fair,
Whom he had chosen in his human right.

And Margaret listen'd, and her eyes grew bright,
Not dim with tears; say how should she, unloved,
Who never till this hour had seen the light,
Behold it first undazzled and unmoved?
Before the glittering mist fell down, her eyes
Looked through it upon one who at her feet
Bent low—His Highness, Albrecht—but nowise
Serene, when through the mist their glances meet.

Thus she, entangled in the drifting tide
Of circumstance, and borne on the strong surge
Of that man's passionate will, is turn'd aside;
All things without her, as within, converge,
And changing by their might the course which she
Had taken of her single heart, they bear
Her high upon some rock of the wild sea
Of Fate, and leave her stranded, breathless, there.

The struggle of a moment now was past,
And Margaret dizzy, blinded, deaf, and strange,
No look behind, no thought before her cast;
While all was new around, all rush and change,
Fürst Albrecht speeded to his Fatherland,
And there the coming of his "bride" awaited;
So—ere the swallows had conven'd their band,
Margaret had fled, and when they came—was mated.

Some Titans of old to a high green mound
  Six hundred and odd good years ago,
Carried great blocks of granite and crown'd
  That hill the sovereign lord of a row
Of other hills, which rose from the banks
Of a river which washed their heaving flanks.

And have gather'd and grown since the days of yore,
  Those stones which the Titan men of eld
Over the brow of the steep hill bore;
  Have gather'd and grown, and their own have held
Against all comers, and risks they ran
From the rain of heaven and wrath of man.

Have gather'd and grown, and stand forth now
  A grey old castle, and home of one
Feeble and proud, but who still, I trow,
  Is of those Titans of old a son;
But plenty and ease have the stock overgrown,
Like the moss which covers the old grey stone.

And in days gone by there came to the foot
Of the sovereign hill a trembling band
Of little Trades, to take shelter and root
Under the shadow struck over the land
By the proud great castle whose skirts they caught,
Seeking custom and refuge for service wrought.

Now years and years the castle has stood,
Holding its own, but growing no more;
Gathering nothing but moss, while the wood,
Skirting the mound in the days of yore,
Is falling, tree by tree at a time,
For the lowly houses to struggle and climb.

The castle it nodded in olden days,
From its proud high place to the band below,
And it paid the fealty in many rough ways
Of those who rendered it tribute and show
Of homage, and shielded their honest toil
From the wandering troops who had made it their spoil.

But now it stands there gloomy and cold,
  Peering from under its beetling brows,
And it seeks thro' an alien to strengthen the hold,
  Whose tenure of old was the people's vows.
And to-day it does nothing but tremble and frown
At the rising roofs of the growing town.

In that grey old castle was a tower,
  Or a turret, nearer to the cloud,
Nearer to the sunshine and the shower,
  Nearer to the voices soft or loud
  Of the spirits wandering in the cloud,—
Nearer far than anything the eye
Lighted on betwixt the earth and sky.

In the tower by times a lady wander'd,
  Pacing up and down, and to and fro;
Paus'd before the window oft and pondered,
  Seeming rest or peace no more to know
  Than the spirits of the winds which blow
Through the open fretwork of the stone,
In a melancholy broken tone.

Wandering thus *she* might have seem'd a spirit,
By the tide of Time left here alone,
And the grey old turret to inherit
Of some woe which made the place its own;
But upon her cheek was brightly blown
The red rose symbol of internal strife,
And that hectic told of mortal life.

She it was who as she paced and ponder'd
Up and down the chamber in the tower,
As she set her wild thought free, and wander'd
With it o'er a wilderness in flower;
She it was who here one silent hour
Writ those couplets in a note-book down,
Telling of the castle and the town.

Oft her thought, upheav'd by joy or pain,
Overflowed the chalice of her brain,
And fell from her in abundant rain.
Written words so settling on the page
Could the fever of her mind assuage.
Thus one day in stormy haste she wrote
In that book from which again I quote.

I would have thee still and calm my thought,
For a judge betwixt me and my fate,
So thy errant steps I've sometimes caught,
Set thee down, and made thee humbly wait;
Nothing tell in malice, nothing bate
Of all which thou hast known and I have felt
Since in this cheerless world we both have dwelt.

And I would have thee cool, and so I fain
Would pluck thee flushed and heated from the breast,
Or from the ceaseless cradle of the brain,
Where thou art rocked, but never canst find rest.
No more by vapours not thy own oppress'd,
Thou'lt set my case before me; there will be
Two at this council-board—my Thought and Me.

Begin, and show me all the life I've lived
Beneath these walls; see if my Fate or I
Be most to blame, that I have not achieved
More of those fruits they say can never die;
And if impatient word and weary sigh
Were sins too heavy for those endless years
Which if but two in time, were ten in tears?

I came here—how, in truth, I scarce can tell,
Borne on a whirlwind it would seem; a fly
Caught by its wings, indeed I know not well,
The whirlwind as I think was but a sigh.
I came here—vain to seek the how or why—
Confused and giddy with the voyage I lay,
Nor waked my dormant soul for many a day.

But I do wake, and lo! upon my limbs—
Picture me still the foolish fly as said—
A sense of weight,—a mist before me swims;
While over head, and hands, and feet is spread
A fine close mucor which I cannot shed—
A film almost impalpable, which clings
Tenaciously on my reviving wings.

It was the binding net-work of that will
Which seem'd to overrule me from the first,
And had kept ever working, close and still,
While I had slept. Rudely I strove to burst
Its meshes, for I had a frantic thirst
For freedom:—the poor clay he could command,
He held—I pass'd—and left it in his hand!

And so he ruled its motions, and ordaining
  Its comings and its goings, and feign'd smiles,
He was content, and thought that he was reigning
  Supreme within a round of twenty miles;
  While far beyond his realm my soul defiles,
I leave him lordship over the dull clay
To set it up, and move it as he may.

And this because when it, in early days,
  Had been informed by my own heart and mind,
He had pursued it with the ceaseless gaze
  Of inquisition, striving still to find
  An end in each light act, and to unwind
Some fancied thread of mystery, which bound
All that he could not reach, or had not found.

An end? A purpose? I have yet to learn
  That this waste wilderness we call our life
Has ends and objects at its every turn,
  Worthy of such close canvass and hot strife.
  Albert, you much mistook your English wife—
She had not that deep Teuton head which bridges
With thought the future's very mountain ridges!

But, Freedom! I am of thy country—I
  Was born in that blest island which the sea
Binds as a yielding girdle, which each sigh
  Or sob, or breath of the high heart so free,
  Lifts into tides and waves, or such as we
So call, and where each wandering wind of heaven
Salts incorruptibly the spreading leaven.

I would not even bind thee, my shy thought,
  So closely, but that thou might'st come and go,
Sometimes without the danger of being caught,
  And set before me, hurried and aglow.
  The folds of that green girdle, do they know
Why they are shaken? Neither could I say
Wherefore I pal'd or flush'd, was sad or gay.

Let me be just; and, if my thoughts are free,
  Let them be not unkind; I wrong'd him more,
And tried him more, perhaps, than he tried me.
  For he did love me in those days, and wore
  Me nearer as I think to his heart's core
Than aught beside. It was my grief and sin
To hold from him the heart he could not win.

I will not say that he was light of love,
Or that he held with feeble clasp the thing
He prized; but I was cramped, and could not move
Within his narrow sphere, and so took wing:—
To feed his flame I had no oil to bring!
And could not bend my soul to watch and trim
A lamp whose brightest light still left me dim.

And so it faded out, while I sate by
In poverty of heart, a loveless wife,
Who, like the foolish virgins, came not nigh
To entertain the flickering Lamp of Life.
And it was better thus; where Love is rife
In one of two such unrelated hearts,
Neither can taste of peace till he departs.

Oh, Love! although I have been left by thee
An orphan in this world, thy very thought,
Or but its shadow on this page, to me
Is still a spell in which my soul is caught
Trembling, but unreluctant and o'erwrought
With such a rainbow vesture of despair,
As makes thy mourning glorious to wear.

I do not bask in thy full light, nor ever
Shall see thy day; but still thy broken beams
Smite through my frostwork with benign endeavour,
To cheer my twilight with prismatic gleams.
I have beheld thee from my birth, in dreams,
And know thee, honour, worship, love thee so,
I could not mock thee with an empty show.

Perhaps so much of thy divinest essence
As found its way into that other heart,
Might still have made it holy with its presence,
In spite of wayward humours on the part
Of the beloved, or of caprice, or smart
Encounters of the will; such things we know
Will sometimes keep alive the fire they blow.

I think indeed it was not these which killed
The love he bore me, since, for weal or woe,
I knew not such light weapons. I was filled,
Ay, drenched with grief, when first I came to know
My heart and his, and in the overflow
Of bitter tears he strove to quench in vain
His lamp went out in the persistent rain.

Well, that is past; I've said 'twas better so;
Waking had I but learnt to know Love's face,
I had not done such wrong, or felt such woe.
Pass on, pass on, I find it hard to chase
My thoughts from dwelling in this cheerless place;
Beyond it there is little left to state,
Here on this trial of my Soul and Fate.

Came a day—long, very long ago—
It was before my soul and body parted,
The better to endure their lot I know, [thwarted
The chain which bound both then, that chain which
The lives of fifty thousand souls, who smarted
Within its iron links, pressed with severer
Force upon me because I stood the nearer;—

Came a moment when I rose upright
And said and saw that I was strong and young;
And saw and said I had a human right
To life and liberty of act, and wrung
The fetters from my hands, and fiercely sprung
Upon a course more free, more full of whim,
Than any I had taken but for him.

I said I cannot love, but I will live.
I thought in those past days there was a measure
Of life without that spirit which must breathe
Life into life itself; and seeing pleasure
I followed with quick step, but my rude seizure
Did ruffle her, and crush'd the dewy flowers
With which she helps the Morn to crown the Hours.

An odour came from those crush'd flowers, my sense
Did sicken; not as when in maiden days
I pluck'd some chance poor bud, whose sweet, intense,
And penetrating perfume did amaze
And light my soul up with a sudden blaze
Of Hope, pressing with fiery tongue his plea;
These flowers but said, "There is no hope for thee!"

I wore them still; not long, but for a time,
And he look'd on, as through the waste I flew,
But could not stay me in the wanton prime
Of strength and new-born freedom; and he grew
Still more enamoured as I turn'd and threw
His menace back—for, like a tyrant, he
Had a strange love and fear of all things free.

Stung by oppression, sudden I had grown
What nature never meant that I should be,
A creature wild and fierce, a panther, known
For its dread beauty; had it flatter'd me
To daunt him, and to make him bow the knee,
I could have done it then, and, in his name,
Left deeds which future times might praise or blame.

But Power is a sacred thing, I felt
No call to wield it while the elements
Of my own being in disorder dwelt
Within me; and if I had had such bents
I hold not that the goodliest intents
Can hide mean objects from their native starkness,
Or that the fruits of light can grow in darkness.

I did not wrong myself by careful use
Of that I had so carelessly acquired;
But laid it by in scorn, and did refuse
To touch it ever after, uninspired
By that wild spirit which my wrong had fired.
I showed him that I could be free, then went
And bore his chain again in proud content.

He thinks he has done bravely thus to win
The mastery, as crouching at his door
He sees the leopard's empty painted skin.
It is enough—what tyrant can have more?
And now I live two lives, the one before
His world and him, the other up on high,
Here in this turret, nearer to the sky.

Two lives, and yet not one in life's full sense:
Now judge me, patient Thought, nor do forget
I had no mother,—in the void immense
Left by that want, a sort of throne is set
For one who does not fill it all, but yet
Is dear; now say, so stricken at the root,
Could I break forth in flower, or ripen fruit?

I may have gifts and graces I have never
Accounted for,—bright weapons left to rust,—
Talents I have not sought with firm endeavour
To bring to light; weigh these, my Thought, be just.
But hist! a step approaches, and I must
Not even wait thy sentence—Love will only
Pronounce upon a heart by love left lonely!

Thus turning sharply in her agony
From hearing of her finite thought's decree,
She fled for judgment to her God, for He
  Is love we know; and if she might have seemed
  To charge Him with shortcomings which she
Came of the little light she had possest, [deemed
He could forgive her this with all the rest.

Many threads were cast off by the woof
Of Time, before from the base world aloof
  The lady of the turret sate again
In the small chamber with the cone-shaped roof
  Still pointing to the clouds through wind and rain.
It would be late, and vain as late to tell
How she who with her thoughts so loved to dwell
  Was married Margaret—weary of her chain;
Margaret whose right hand felt the iron grasp
Of Albert's left, and stiffen'd in its clasp,
  Without one token of her inward pain.

To-day meek meditation on her face
The heat and flush of conflict did replace;
No storm of words over the paper flow'd;
But looking from the turret on the town
A mild sweet radiance seem'd to rise and drown
The very light which in her eyes had glow'd.

Looking from the town up to the tower
Which that captive lady made her bower,
She might have seemed—so lofty and enshrined—
A being who had got beyond the soil,
The sorrow and the fear, and the turmoil,
But not beyond the pity for her kind.

Before she went, she wrote—as was her way—
Some record of her visit there that day.

I love this German folk,—my heart had made
Its home among them cheerily, if he
Had suffered; not the people who are paid
To fawn and flatter, smile and bend the knee,
But those whose individuality
Is less restrained, whose natures can unfold
Without the impress of a courtly mould.

I listened to a symphony last night,
The work of some far-reaching mind which grew
Upon this patient soil, and full in sight
A grey-haired man there sat, whose rapt face drew
My gaze and fix'd it; at these sounds, that view—
A sight and sounds peculiar to this land—
Its genius first I seemed to understand.

A complicate intelligence, I thought,
A simple and a single heart—join these,
And let the first be cloudily o'erwrought,
The latter open to each beam or breeze,—
And something of the primal thought you seize,
Embodied in this people, far above
Most others wise to know, and warm to love.

I think of Helmuth now, and Guineveder,—
He is a German, she his Celtic wife.—
How gently round the hill-sides does he lead her,
How far from toil and care, from fear and strife!
How free and safe, and beautiful her life!
How beyond women is this woman blest,—
Where others find a yoke, she hath found rest.

Long time ago I first saw Guineveder
In her own land, and mine—but did not know
Her much in those past days, or did not heed her;
And now as she floats by a sort of glow,
A brightness not her own, invests her so,
Her glory quite eclipses my faint spark,
And, dazzling me, still leaves me in the dark.

As on her shining path walks Guineveder,
The love-light of his eyes upon her brow,
There lingering in a halo, does impede her [now.
From wreathing thoughts which pressed on it ere
When she draws nigh my humbled soul must bow
Before her, for no queen can boast a throne
More proud than that high heart she calls her own.

Where'er she sets her face, this Guineveder,
He follows with swift thought her wishful eyes,
And hurries on the way which they would lead her,
To guard her against danger or surprise.
Wherever thus encompass'd Guender hies
She steps unfearing, with the heedless mind
Of a young child, and smiles as smile the blind.

There is no age for charméd Guineveder,
  His kisses keep the blushes on her cheek
For ever fresh,—for his sake heaven speed her!
  He loves her as a God, and does not seek
  From her he deems so fair, so fond, so weak,
For anything but love; yet, should he need her,
  She loves him as a woman—and there is
  Not much to choose betwixt that love and his.

They sting, at last they sting, (she wrote again)—
  These hornets of the court,—and I have worn
A mail of cold and proud reserve in vain;
  Their venom home to its true mark is borne
  Upon a thousand paltry shafts, and torn
And angry is the flesh they now have reached
Betwixt the harness joints so fiercely breached.

They swarm about me, these loud insects, I
  Not hurting them, would sweep them from my path;
They dodge my hand, but darkening still my sky,
  Confuse me with their ceaseless hum of wrath.
  My very solitude, this chamber, hath
Lost something of its tranquil gloom—my mind
Leaves not at its low door the world behind.

Fürst Albrecht's wife they scarcely dare contemn;
My lady countess, though not "Hoch-geboren,"
Is still the creature of his hand for them, [shorn
And would have some scant homage were she
Of all which should God's handiwork adorn;
Some questionable right to breathe and be
E'en here on their Olympus, they agree.

But thee, poor Julia, light and kind of heart,
They trouble my more steadfast soul thro' thine;
To bear and suffer is thy daily part,
To suffer and to vindicate is mine.
With what barbarian skill do they divine
The torments which now turn thy outward life
To inward grief, my inward one to strife!

Poor gay free heart, thou canst not seek retreat
Within thyself; thou dost not yearn like me
Some concord unattainable to meet
Of soul with soul—nor lacking it canst be
Content from coarser ties to wander free
When the rude contact pains thee, and to find
"Asylum for all ills" in thine "own mind."

But made for light and kindly interchange,
  Ready to give, and grateful to receive,
To thee it is a pang to wander strange
  And lonely round a circle, tho' it cleave
  Together first in its low wish to grieve,—
Feigning a warmth which like a bivouac fire
Shall keep the hungry wolves from drawing nigher.

How churlishly they here assert a right [deed.
  Which dates from knightly time and knightly
And how ignobly use their paltry might [need
  To crush those weaker than themselves, whose
  Had made them sacred by the olden creed
Of honour, whose high dicta did appoint
Their fathers to their places and anoint.

But this is past, gone with the strong right hand
  And resolute rude will which did achieve,
Not circumvent; and now as here they stand
  Before me, I would gladly seek reprieve
  From their poor puppet grandeur, and would
Their solemn trifling for the lighter vein [leave
Of her who freezes in their cold disdain.

I must love symbolism, for I hide,
I think, a "poet corner" in my soul,
And sensuous pictures of my thoughts will glide
Before them ever—making clear the whole;
But thoughts which can so willingly enrol
The fancy, must be true, and should be fair,
Noble or strong, significant or rare.

Thus as I do love symbols, so I hate
The acted lies which make the measure full
Of these court lives—the mockery of state,
The functional big titles which are null,
Lacking the functions—all the hollow, dull,
And vain observance, which is but the crust
Of emptiness, or of ancestral dust.

Yes, loving symbols, I the more do hate
Those outward shows which serve but to confuse,
Which seek not to make clear the complicate
And woven threads of life, but to abuse
With mystery and falsehood the most plain:
And thus I render back their mock disdain.

For her—my mother,—for I call her so,
And feel her such almost in this alliance
Of sorrow,—I would have her straightway go,
For she is free, and bid a gay defiance,
In happier scenes, to all the poor appliance
Of such ambition as she once might own,
And leave me here to bear my weight alone.

She hesitates, but I must have it so;
She thinks she swayed me once, and has incurr'd
A debt towards me; but I feel and know
An hour is coming, even as the bird
Anticipates the storm ere it has stirr'd
The branches overhead, when I would be
Alone, confronted with my destiny.

I could not gather all my force within,
If one who claimed to share my load were near;
Or bear a wound that did but graze the skin
In any combat, if it brought a tear
From eyes which loved me, and to me were dear;
So, Julia, go, for clouds already close
The long perspective that I gave my woes.

I sometimes turn from lighter jars away,
And look up all my weapons of defence,
All that could give me strength in that dread day
I see before me; would to God that hence
I could draw comfort, but a dreary sense
Of desolation gains upon me here; [fear.
Where art thou, God, Love, Truth?—I know, but

"My mind to me," as one has sung before,
"A kingdom is;" alas! that I must say,
A kingdom in revolt—that at its core
The demon, Doubt, is working his dark way,
And trampling out each spark of hope which lay
Upon the ashes of my altar fires,
While my soul breathless wanders and inquires.

Yes, wanders up and down in its wild search
For truth, and to each watchman of the night
Cries with despairing accent; at each church
Peers in with haggard scrutiny, its sight
Perturbed with blinding tears: O Truth, O Light,
Oh, show me, lead me, where my lost soul bleeds,
Among the ruins of a thousand creeds!

Let me not lay upon my festering sore
A balm which cannot heal, and scarce allays
Its pain, nor veil the quivering wound before
Some haunting fable of my early days.
If in the soul's true love the soul surveys
Her truest measure, then look up, my soul,
Truth is thy one sole aim, desire, and goal.

I have called Doubt a demon; can it be
The enemy of man who thus would send
A soul in quest of Holy Truth, and be
The instigator of such cries as rend
The curtains of convention, while they bend
Despairing knees,—are these the gay delights
With which the prince of a vain world invites?

It may be that the reading, as the writing,
Of many books, is vanity; and so,
That I have dulled my soul, instead of lighting
Its corners with the sacrificial glow
Of holy deeds;—this may be true, but oh!
How hard the hands which thrust me from the ark,
To wander houseless, with a sky so dark!

I might have taken wing in pleasant times,—
  I should have taken wing however held,—
And wandered far away to other climes,
  To pour forth prayers and praises, unrepell'd
  By such close durance; for my soul had swell'd,
And burst *that* shell, however sad and loth,—
Not in disorder, but in healthy growth.

For e'en *within* the limits where I first
  Awoke to life,—those dimly-lighted walls
Of dogmas and dead forms,—my spirit durst
  Not flutter; I was told, "The worm there crawls,
  The cattle are content to walk—these halls
Have space enough for them,—thy outspread wings
Are here but useless and vainglorious things."

Alas! poor dove--the same hand fashioned him
  That form'd the patient kine; and if he roam
In depths of space remote, and oft-times dim,
  He seeks what they perchance have found, a home,
  A place of rest beneath one same blue dome;
God over all—the Universal Sun,—
We individual, striving one by one.

On my dove's wings I flew away, but found
No rest, a watery chaos everywhere,
Of thoughts unstable, no dry land, no ground,
No mark to guide me through the pathless air.
Faint, faint and spent, back to the old dark lair
I turn'd abashed,—I had not even brought
The olive branch so passionately sought.

I did not long abide there, but again
Went forth on the same quest of Love and Light;
And still I wander through the world in vain,
Hopeless and weary, while the gathering night
Warns me of danger, which I have nor might
Nor spirit to withstand, tho' with no friend
To weep, I still may make a Pagan end.

So, Julia, go—for over the quaint hum
Of insect wrath which rises from that band,
I feel a silence terrible and dumb;
On high I see a cloud like a man's hand,—
It is that same which once I could command,
But did not; now it reddens as it grows,
And sternly on my fate I see it close.

Oh! I am weak, I am not what I seem
To other eyes—nay, nay, no need of tears
To witness to the words; mine eyes might stream,
Yet leave unshown such anguish as appears,
Such weakness as is spoken in the fears
And doubts confided to this secret page,—
Such fever of the heart, such cries, such rage.

Oh, barren stock of my still trailing life,
To any prop which bore thee up on high
Thou would'st have humbly clung, but in the strife
Thou hast been ever baffled, and passed by.
Now lying on the ground I see draw nigh
The vampires of my childhood, unappeas'd,—
Sick thoughts which grow with energy diseas'd.

I have been much, perhaps too much alone;
My mind has lost its balance as I think;
All outside beauty, green and ripe, seems blown
To dust, my haggard gaze appears to sink
Through the world's loveliness at every chink,
And see the worm beneath the daisied grass,
The skeletons of all things, as thro' glass.

Not knowing the Creator as I ought
To understand the creature, all seems dark
And terrible; the actions that are wrought
Around me seem the product of some spark
Galvanic, lifeless, worked without a mark,
And men and women in a brief convulsion
To move with all the rest till its expulsion.

And now like one in a mesmeric dream
Remembering what I dreamed before, but losing
My intervening life, again I seem
The child in England, sad and solemn, choosing
The Norman church to wander in, and musing
In ghostly awe before the old stone knight
And lady, praying heaven day and night.

My thoughts passed by the monumental show,
The cold joined hands, and visionless stone eyes,
And lingered trembling in the vault below, [rise.
Held by some power which would not let them
The same thro' every change, beneath all skies,
Teach me to love, or let me cease to think,
Else in the flood of heaving thought I sink!

No hope! drift on, lost soul, to meet thy fate,
Cold without love, dark without faith, drift on,
In speechless fear, alone and desolate,
Thy few and evil days will soon be done.
Wipe but the tears from off that cheek so wan,
And stoically wait, till, charg'd with thunder,
That cloudy hand unfolds, and sweeps thee under.

England bleeds! hush'd be my selfish wail,—
What matter if one heart the more should pine?
A thousand hearts are broken, lips are pale,
Which kisses burn to press; the shell, the mine,
Sword, bayonet, lance, and ball which burning flies,
Are blotting out God's image with man's blood,
And, putting out the light of woman's eyes,
Drown dead and living in one fiery flood.

England bleeds! Since first her rich life stream
Was mix'd with blood of Alma grapes, press'd out
By eager feet, an open wound would seem
To be for ever running; while about
Her bed, her board, her path by day and night,
Stalk Pestilence and Famine; withering frost,
And driving winds, which carry in forced flight
The tents from over heads by fever toss'd.

England bleeds! and the cold world looks on,—
Looks on and smiles, or takes a careless bet
Upon the issue; for she stands alone,
Above, beyond all sympathies; and yet,
Wounded and bleeding, she could feel a pang
Beyond her wounds, when, answering to her moan,
A chorus of demoniac laughter rang
From those whose love she counted for her own.

And there be some of those who cling about
The skirts of Austria, who in turn bows down
Before the nod of Russia—who look out
For days when war's fierce rallying cries shall drown
The laughter they affect, but which is all
Inadequate to their deliberate hate;
Of such is Albrecht, burning for a call
To head the little army of his state—

Against the foes who menace, as he thinks,
The future of his class. To-day I write
Not in the turret, through whose time-worn chinks
The wind comes driving in, but full in sight
Of the old keep and courtyard, where this while
Fürst Albrecht's staff and guards his coming wait;
It is his whim to make them oft defile
Before him now: they murmur—he is late.

He uses not the courtesy of kings;
The men look shrivelled as they blow upon
Their frozen fingers; on the stone sharp rings
The clang of hoofs impatient to be gone.
The air is thick with steaming breath, and chill
The mocking sun gleams on the frosty spangle
Which decks the walls; the wind blows with a will,
Through the grey archway north of the quadrangle.

It is a sorry hour that they have past,
Horses and men; but hist! at yonder door
Fürst Albrecht breaks upon their sight at last.
He wears a look that I have seen before,
Of gloom which brooks no question; on his head
A helmet presses, while the glance below
Wanders abstracted, and his heavy tread
Is eager still. He mounts, and off they go.

But first our guest, the Herzog, rides this way
To join them, and he sees me as I rise;
Uncovers, and bows down that head so grey
And cunning, while he fixes me with eyes
Which have a stony twinkle, and with chin
Obsequious points a false and hollow smile;
What has such forced, mock reverence to win
From me, old man of subtlety and guile?

Albrecht has seen me too; the sullen turn
Reveals that fact to me, and one beside.
And now a young voice cries, "God speed! go learn
The noble art which shall bow down the pride
Of those who fain would crush us and our race!"
I look with all the rest, and, gazing out
Upon the show, I see a laughing face;
It is Amalia's face, and merry shout.

She is the Herzog's daughter, and just now
The darling of one half our little sphere,
The puzzle of the other, who endow
This girl with gifts which they affect to fear.
They are too timorous; her round, fair face,—
Blonde by the eyes and hair, but not the skin,—
Wants not a certain gay and wilful grace,
Which early could my willing suffrage win.

See where she wafts me kisses on her hand,
And calls me to her; but I shake my head;
She creeps between all rules, and makes a stand
Against all etiquette; but in her stead
I must seek Julia, who so soon will see
My bleeding England; in her favoured eyes
Some dim foreshadowing may arise for me
Of that loved image—which I would surprise.

My heart, if torn, is strong with love, and hope,
Love's eldest born; and has sprung up at last,
Ready with life in outward act to cope;
When England's cries were borne upon the blast,
My own were hushed, and will be heard no more,
Till hope for her to ripened fruit is brought;
Nor then, but that our life, in trailing o'er
A whole eternity, is worth some thought.

The heart I deem'd was beggar'd of all love,
Opening its gates, took in, in one wide sweep,
Six hundred heroes, whose hot charge could move
And melt its firm foundations to one heap,
One flame, and yet not blot out any form
Of all which rose so grandly thro' the smoke
And cloud of battle—men who led the storm,
Or rallied round a flag, our "Hearts of Oak!"

I see those flashing swords on yonder hill,
And, borne in gusts upon the frosty air,
I hear the sharp command intoned, and thrill
With the strange thought, that if the pageant there
Were other than a plaything, all that band
Would be the foes of England; God! I could
Not touch with mine again, I think, a hand
Which had been redden'd in my people's blood!"

She broke off here; the pen could not dissemble
The moving thoughts which made the writing tremble.

Alone again, I wait and wait
I know not what, except that Fate
Has something it would say to me
This night; and that the messenger
Is to be Albrecht, and that we
Look for no love-tryst, I or he.

But I am calm, and smile at fears
By fever conjured, and by tears
Washed into life; I say what can
He do that our two evil stars
Have not already done—this man,
Prince tho' he be, our lives to ban?

I left them not long since in mute surprise,
He and his friends; from supper as we rise
A rumour of repulse, disgrace, and death,
For England comes—disasters which the breath
Should suffocate in bearing, are toss'd round
From mouth to mouth, while cries of joy resound
Which, had my pain escaped my lips, had drown'd
Its utterance. Oh, ye abject, selfish hearts,
Are ye so full of your ignoble ends,
Your miserable selves, ye scatter'd parts
Of nothing, that your metal must be dumb
When it should vibrate to the groan which rends
That mighty heart, and all the sighs which come
From such a grand adversity as this?
Oh, broken German nation, can ye miss
Yourselves so far, that, like an ill-cast bell,
Ye do thus falsely chime a brother's knell?

I stood aside, and did not speak;
I know not why they look'd at me;
All but Amalia, who is wild,
A giddy and light-hearted child.
She heard the news, and in a freak
Of childish folly it may be,
Presuming on her cousinship
With Albrecht, to his arms she fled,
With tearful eyes and laughing lip,
And on his shoulder laid her head.

The Herzog watched his lively child,—
Reprov'd her sensibility,
But, saying that she was too wild,
I did not like the way he smiled.
All other eyes were turned on me,
I know not what there was to see.

Amalia even turned and looked,
Though hanging still on Albrecht's neck,
And even her gay spirit brooked
For one short while the silent check.
I was too troubled then to fling
Reproaches upon any there;
I only strove my heart to bring
To silence in its first despair.

That silence baffled Albrecht's power,
He could not understand its might,
Nor how upon their joy a blight
Had fallen in its fullest flower;
He hated what he did not know,
Or could not fathom, and a glow
Of wrath was rising on his cheek,
Tho' with constraint he tried to speak.
In bygone days he was content
When he had only crush'd or bent
My will to his in open act,—
He now its inmost life attack'd.

His voice was strange; he said, "Thou, wife,
Standest alone there, cold and still,
Without the circle of my life;
You side against me in this strife
Of adverse interests, while you fill
Your fancy with an idle thought
You should have learnt to count for nought,
Beside my lightest wish or will.
What is this country, that you must
Turn pale when, humbled in the dust,
She sits and expiates her sins?

A woman in her lord should trust,
  Knowing no joy but when he wins,
No sorrow but when on his face
Her tenderness can find its trace."

That moment I surprised a light
  In Albrecht's eyes, above the glow
Of despot wrath—an eagerness,
  A sort of rage to find and know
If any love could shine for him
In that closed heart where all seemed dim.

I thought that feeling had gone out
  For ever, and was touched, I own,
One moment, when there woke a doubt,
  Roused by that strange, uncertain tone.
I paused ere I replied, and scann'd
His face; but then she stroked his hand,—
  Amalia stroked his hand, and smiled
Her tender interest in his face;
  Inconsequent and heedless child,
That smile was madness in this place.

"Let us have each our way," I said;
"I love my country, you your class;
Bondage is hard for those who, bred
In freedom, have been doomed to pass
Beneath a yoke; but the true son
Or daughter of a generous soil
Will keep some hold no arm can reach,
Some liberty of thought and speech,
Some fastness, never to be won,
And which no tyrant can despoil!"

My words flowed largely, calmly out,
As waves wash up upon a beach,
When wind and tide both set one way.
My thought so seldom put on speech—
My inmost thought I mean to say—
I know not where it found the dress
That could its heaving life express;
Only that when the brain so teems,
It acts as blindly as in dreams.

His wrath rose hotter at my words,
The kindlier glow had died away,—
"Your England," was his fierce retort,
"Is closing in disgrace a day
Of insolence, and has been brought,

With all her boasts of freedom, strength,
Of unity, and stolen length
Of territory, down so low,
That Europe, looking on the show,
Seeing her sit, and on her head
The dust of parchment systems spread,
Seeing her dwarfed when standing by
Her great and terrible ally,
Will scarcely raise a victor's shout
When such a feeble light goes out.
Her present blight, and present shame,
Her former boasted glory trebles,—
She has no longer e'en a name
To make the rallying point of rebels!"

I did restrain myself, and stood
There silently—as well I could,
For I do think I had no choice,
The words being there, but not the voice.
My heart, so like a bell within,
Was going,—I could not then begin;
And still all eyes were turned my way,
My own went calmly round the ring;
We know not till we stand at bay
What strength the untried soul can bring.

Then slowly, when that bell had ceased,
I took the office of the priest.

"England has ever stood alone,"
I said; "she is the topmost stone
The social Pyramid which crowns;
Ye know it by your envious hate,
I by the pride which will not bate
A breath for all your taunts and frowns.
Ye did not love her when she stood
Upright, and scattered seeds of good
Around her in abundant life;
Ye would not love her more, I know,
—'Tis not the way of such—when woe
And death upon her path are rife.

"She has not fallen, she cannot fall;
But hear me, Albrecht, hear me, all,—
This stone which tops the Pyramid,—
If it could roll from its high place,
It would crush many at its base!"
I said no more, but Albrecht did.

He lost all hold and mastery
Over his rage. "You are a spy!"
He cried, "within my very realm,
Beneath my roof!" I know not all
He said; he sought to overwhelm
And crush me with the heavy fall
Of raging words; they only made
Me feel we did too much degrade
The chain we wore, by rudely straining
Before strange eyes the links remaining.

"Not here, not now!" I cried, and looked
Around that ring; again he spoke,
"Yes, here, yes, now!"—he would have brooked
No answer, for the fiend awoke
Within him then, and at his warrant
He would have poured forth all the torrent.

But now again Amalia came
With coaxing ways; I know in sooth
Not well if praise be due or blame
To her, or if she tried to smooth
Or ruffle even more the tide
She for one moment turned aside.

"Fie, then, dear Albrecht!" were the words
Between her pouting lips which fell,
"You have made Madame Meta speak
So much already, and now seek
To wring from her those very curds
Of acrid feeling it were well
She kept from you. Look here, I found
This bag, these papers, on the ground,—
This is her writing,—'tis her way
To write what I should babbling say;
Do not torment her with more talk,
But read these touching lines, and let
Them speak for her; I, in my walk,
Read them this morning, and am yet
Not weary of them. Be not hard
Upon her, Albrecht, these will show
How sad it is to be debarred
Of all which makes life dear below."

She had a wilful, headstrong way,
Which helped her to a sort of sway
Over us all. The old man's look,
The way in which he slily took

The snuff which should conceal the twinkle
Of cunning eyes, and, falling, sprinkle
The vest from which it must be shaken,
I liked not. Could I be mistaken?
And could that child of seventeen
Be what that old man must have been?

A single word I could not find,
And stood there breathless, as when wind
Has filled the lungs to overflow;
The storm had turned so suddenly,
I could not with myself agree
Whether to brave it still, or go;
To give them battle, or depart
And leave them to shake out my heart.

For many a passionate despair
Engendered in those two sad years,
Watered with proud and angry tears,
Was in those stolen lines laid bare.
My woes and struggles were confessed,
The life from out my heart was pressed,
And,—trampled out by grief and wrong,—
Was in a rhythmic measure pent,
Which made the potent thought ferment,
And yield the blood-red wine of song.

I did not speak, I did not go,
I stood there still, and let them read;
They would have seen my overthrow
If I had bent my pride to plead
By word or gest,—and so I stood,—
And look'd as one who did not heed.

Amalia cast a furtive glance
At Albrecht, and, upon his sign,
She made the *Hof dame* advance
Within the sanctuary line.
That fossil woman loved me not;
I was the shadow in her lot.
She spoke my tongue, as none beside
Could speak it there, and spite and pride
Gleamed from her eyes, as slowly she
Rubbed her "lunettes," and looked at me.

She read my lines; her cruel voice,
High-pitched and harsh, with solemn pace
Marched on as if it could rejoice
In maiming form and trampling grace.
This I could bear, did bear for long,—
But when in that relentless tone
I heard the flaming words which wrong
Had forced from me,—oh then, I own,

My courage failed,—I waved my hand,
And brought the lecture to a stand.

"Thank you, good madame," were my words;
"You have done well, we must not task
You further:" then, as one who girds
Himself for battle, round the band
I looked a moment; from her hand
I took the book, and, passing by
With rapid step, I did not hear,
Or, hearing coldly, did defy
The whispered words which brushed my ear.
"We'll hear these ravings to the end,
By heaven and earth I swear to bend
Your pride beneath my sovereign hand,—
Read them yourself—I do command!"

I still past on without regard;
I floated in an atmosphere
Of fire; my eager touch unbarred
The stove; the blaze rose high and clear,
One moment, then upon the brands
I tossed the sheets with ruthless hands,
And daunted it; but soon it came
And sucked them in with tongues of flame,
I standing guard until the fire
Had made for them a funeral pyre.

Then first I spoke; I think I yet
  Seemed calm, altho' my pulses beat,
  And all within was at white heat;
I said, "Those burning words were set
  In type within my heart and brain
Before I writ them on that page,
  And in those strongholds will remain.
You force me, Albrecht, thus to teach
That there are worlds beyond your reach."

He caught my wrist; I see there yet
The mourning ring his grasp then set
Upon it; "Hear me, witness all!"
He cried—his look might well appal
The faint hearts there; but mine had past
The bounds where fear a shade could cast.
I said, "I will hear all, but will
  Not hear it here, or longer brook
A single witness; that which still
  Shall pass must not be made the sport
  Or tournay for an idle court!"

I glided from their midst; I shook
  My arm, and freed it; I was grown
So strong and fearless;—and I took
  My way from that great hall alone,

Along the silent gallery,
Where nothing let or hindered me.

And thus it is I sit and wait
I know not what, unless my fate
  Have something it would say to me
This night, and that the messenger
  Is to be Albrecht, and that we
  Look for no love-tryst, I or he;
But I repeat, I smile at fears
By fever conjured, and by tears
  Washed into life; and say what can
He do, that our two evil stars,
Our struggles and degrading jars,
  Have not already done to ban
  Our lives?—a Prince is but a man!"

The hand has fall'n! my Phantom fears,
My fevered thoughts, my prophet tears,—
  The spectral bodings of a mind
O'erwrought,—gave truer counsel yet

Than that forced calm which sternly set
All fears at nought; so bold, so blind,
It had forgot that in this land
Two wayward hearts might loose the band
Which held them. I have heard all now:
He has been here; our nuptial vow
Is to be rent by law asunder,—
His is the hand,—and this the thunder!

I am upon my knees,—I pray,
Or strive to pray; I have been proud,
Too proud I know,—is this the way
My pride must in the dust be bowed?
My bleeding England I shall see
With Julia,—but my place will be
Not where in spotless honour stand
Her maids and matrons; my torn hand
Snatched from its manacles, I dare
Not give in troth to any there;
But I must drag in shame and pain
Along the world a broken chain.

"UNTO THE UPRIGHT THERE ARISETH LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS."
Psalm cxii. 4.

Vanity, weariness, cried the preacher,
All is vanity under the sun;
The narrow earth-bound aims of the creature,
All he seeks for, all he has won;
But what he is doing, and what he has done,
In the moulding skill of his cunning hand,
And the shaping toil of his seething brain,—
These change the curse to benign command;
For the work of man's hand brings peace in its train,
And labour, as labour, is never quite vain.

But weariness, vanity yet again
Be said of a new thing under the sun:
The work of a woman's hand and brain,
Such work as our age has seen begun;
Not the work which in old time won
The silk and purple, or caused to rise
The children who called her blessed, but work
Done as a task for a sordid prize,—
Food, shelter for one who would gladly shirk
The bare life bought with the toil and irk.

Done for *One*, ay, there appears
The source of all sorrow and heaviness;
The bread for but one is made heavy with tears;
A greater burden would weary her less,
And helpless hands which might round her press
Would help her; woman is all too strong
To work for one only, and all too weak
In man's illusions to tax and prolong
Her toil for his vain ambitions, or seek
Gods which can neither think, hunger, nor speak.

But the time is come when the Battle of Life
  Must be fought by woman, and often alone.
Many a woman can never be wife,
  And many a mother's heart makes moan
  Over the children she never has known.
Yet one thought raises her out of the dust,
  And vindicates toil in its utmost need;
One thought sweetens her slumber and crust,
  And she follows that one where the bravest lead,—
  To possess herself, is her dear-bought mead.

She is not the source of honour, her light
  Can never brighten the brow she loves;
She but sets it humbly within his sight,
  And stands back chastened, as it behoves.
  But toiling alone for the fishes and loaves,
She tastes that fruit which can never fail
  To the worker without foul crime and wrong,
Save in times when the muscles could levy black mail,
  When the lords of the earth were the savage and
    strong,
  And the gentle and weak were but good for a song.

To be self-dependent,—to spread your leaves,
  Your branches, and haply some modest flower,
Round and about you, as each receives
  A bidding from sunshine, from dew, or shower;
  Not to be forced down to trail or to cower
Against the sap, away from the sun,
  At the will of another, whose narrow thought
Conceives no measure for yours but his own,—
  Who will not be won, and who cannot be taught,—
  This is an end to be dearly bought!

So Margaret, woman, and sometime wife,—
  As the title went with her whilom lord,—
Had settled herself to a toilsome life,
  Knowing the worth of its one reward.
She had chosen her work with a wise, calm care,
  Yet scarcely chosen, for who can choose?
But had taken, not that which had promised most fair,
  But the path she had seemed least likely to lose,—
A shady path, where the world's cold stare
  Came not to trouble, to ask, or accuse.

It was Julia's roof which sheltered her still,
As it had in those bright, brief Roman days;
But Margaret's presence could never more fill,
With its spring-tide beauty and joyance, the place
She dwelt in, or make itself felt in a glow
Which kindled the common things around;
So, though holding together through weal and woe,—
These twain in a chance community found,
Stood free,—one fluttering to and fro,
The other toiling to keep her ground.

And Margaret sits at her work one night,
Dressing the thoughts of another in words,
The best she can find by the feeble light
Of love she can bring to the task; she girds
Her patience up, the end is at hand,
The sheets fill rapidly, write, still write,—
So much ere the pen can be brought to a stand?—
The earnest face with no flickering light
Of dawning thought from the fair dream-land
Bending above it far into the night.

At last the task is finished, she throws
The sheets together that bear no trace
In all their writing of those past woes
Which have left their mark on the sorrowful face.
But even the face is calm if pale
Now, as she lays it against the chair;
For moons have waxed and waned since her tale
Of wrong and error and proud despair
Has been all told out. Tears, transports, fail,—
And she sits there weary without a care.

But what is this? What has made to start
The hand which was lightly engaged but now?
What has caused the blood to rush out of her heart?
What has paled her lip, what has darken'd her brow?
What has she seen in the printed page
In reading whereof for awhile she sought
The throbbing of toil-worn nerves to assuage?
What has she seen which has overwrought
The weary brain with this sudden rage,
And set her project of healing at nought?

Why does she lay the journal aside,
And blankly stare with that inward gaze,
Looking not seeing, then faltering glide
To the window which looks on the troublous maze
Of the silent city? Why, needing rest,
Does she stand there still as the hours go by?
Murmuring words, but, like one possest,
Only to question and to deny,
Locking wild thoughts with her hands in her breast,
"Albrecht? Amalia? *not* married!" And why?

She had not loved him; or if one while
She had seen him glorious in the flame
Which had burn'd for her, that had ceased to beguile
Long ere the crash of their severance came.
She may not have loved him, but they had stood
Most near, and a mystic tho' buried tie
Will call from the ground with a voice like blood,
And it shook her this moment to hear the cry:
And thus in the hurry of thought she stood
And watched the clouds rushing over the sky.

How long she stood may never be told;
All was silent and hushed as death,
Clear in the lamp-light, quiet and cold,
When a door was opened far down beneath
The high, high window which looked on the street,
And the death-like pause which had reigned around
Is broken at last by the cadence of feet,
As a regular step passes over the ground,
Firm and strong in its even beat,
And sure of the goal to which it is bound.

Fainter and fainter, but unconfused,
Dying away down the long straight street,
She heard that tread, till, her sense, abused,
Weak and o'erwrought with unwonted heat,
Seemed quickened still by the rhythmic sound
When the feet had borne their owner afar,
And it rocked her thought till at last she found
Oblivion of all that could strain or jar,
And dropping weary and prone to the ground
She slept in the eye of the morning star.

But what is one sweet sleep when Nature stands
Our creditor for many watchful nights
And working days, and presses her demands,
Importunately holding by her rights?
When turning on us if we think to set
Our will against her, heedless of our sighs,
She starves us into payment of her debt
By sternly cutting off the brain's supplies.

The hand that holds the pen that makes the sign
Which is the bridge of Thoughts, and carries some
Into the future in a linkéd line,
And helps the many still to go and come
From heart to heart, from head to head,—that hand
Droops listless on the page, no thought to guide,
When our hard creditor has made her stand;
Will, need, impatience,—all by her defied.

And thus it fell that after that deep sleep
Margaret arose, and to her morning toil
Addressed herself; she took an untouched heap
Of close-writ paper, which had made recoil
Many a one for labour better strung
Than she; but still she hunted in and out
Her brain for synonyms, and still she hung
Weary and dazed above it and about.

More days upon this pattern came and went,
Before she yielded; but when then she found
Her needful strength in vain resistance spent,
She closed the contest; autumn had come round,
With dull blank days for city-dwelling folk,
And rare wild wreaths of beauty for the face
Of matron Nature; so she left the smoke
And moil of dismal London for a space.

Once more together journeying! Freakish Fate
Had surely jostled them, that just this twain
Should wander side by side upon the straight
Wide road of Life, as in some narrow lane.
Margaret and Julia! Of no kith or kin;
The elder woman light as the wing'd seed
That autumn eddies make to whirl and spin—
The lithe green younger rooted as a reed.

The old heart with its harder surface clear
And equal; and the young with many a score
Deep dinted by the tides of hope and fear,
As ripple marks upon a sandy shore.
Yet such as they two were, they were content
Each with the other to consort; and so
Upon their way, to humour Margaret's bent,
They stopped where she had dwelt long time ago.

The autumn smell of apples,—how it brings
Old times to mind! The trees have grown and [bear
More closely on the house; ah! little wings,
Ye all have left the swallows' nests up there;—
Gone *sans* the blessing that she used to give.
The porch by which she stands is surely lower;—
How long she waits;—the dame's step, as I live;—
Ah no, the step she hears approach is slower.

The door falls back; it is, it is the dame!
Was she prepared to meet that eager smile?
Had any said to-day that Margaret came?
Had Margaret written? No, but sudden wile
Could never cheat with warmth that frozen face,
Rigid, and iron-bound with dark grey hair.
She coldly led her to the trim "house-place,"
And stood herself beside the goodman's chair.

Thence eyed her guest askance, as who would shun
The disadvantage of an opening move;
But finding Margaret silent still, begun
To air the thought which in the narrow groove
Of a shrewd wit was turning round about,—
The thought that Margaret, sad and unmade wife,
But came so far, and looked her old friends out,
To fix on them the burthen of her life.

"Margaret, you have been left to stand alone,
And have not stood; nay, call it what you will,"—
The hard words fell and pelted her like stone,—
"It was a fall; tho' set upon a hill,
Consorting with the wicked in their days,
Fed from their flesh-pots, clothed in vain attire,
Even the wrathful end of such light ways
Was better than abiding in the mire.

"Light bonds are lightly loosed; it matters not
What name we give to that you owned so lately;
If you should call it marriage, still I wot
A lowlier lot were prouder, if less stately;
And if we leave it marriage, yet I trow
That married 'gainst the law, the so-called wife,
Or be she bound or sundered, still should go
Where none must share the soilure of her life."

There came no answer; Margaret but drew near
To where the old man sat, with mind gone out,
Gazing at smouldering embers; and could hear
Him mutter to himself, and felt in doubt
If she should rouse him. "Dark and cold," he said,
"Cold and dark,"—and slowly chafed his hands;
And when he spoke, he did not turn his head,
But spoke again, still gazing at the brands.

"Margaret, little Margaret, come again;
Forgive her, mother, now, and take her in;
Don't let her stand and try our door in vain;
Eh? did she come to grief?—or was it sin?"
"'Twas grief and sin, it's likely," said the dame;
"They hunt in couples, and together chase
The soul upon the path of wrath and shame,
As all have found who turned their back on grace."

"Farewell, good friend," said Margaret, and she bent
To kiss the old man's hand, and looked the while
An angel, with her brow of mild intent,
Her serious eyes, and unresenting smile.
In days when tyranny had made her proud,
She knew not the world's malice to defy
As now, when, with her head so meekly bowed,
She stood, and let the harmless shafts go by.

"Farewell, it is not alway cold and dark,
And we shall meet upon some onward path,"
She said, and passed away as the last spark
Of the dull embers died upon the hearth.
He who gives nothing else to one who needs,
To salve his conscience, gives him an ill name;
She knew this for a point in worldly creeds,
And tried to steel her heart against such blame.

It was a hard endeavour, and not all
Successful, for behind the broad firm shield
Of Patience which she held, there still would fall
Some arrows on a part not wholly steeled.
Gloomy walls which overhung her youth,
Darker, closer, as the years wear on,
She who loved ye with a tender truth,
Clinging fondly to the past—is gone!

But whither, whither, toiling up the lane?
No whither but to be alone, unseen,
Far from the village where the elm-trees rain
Their yellow leaves in showers upon the green.
Where is she now? The crooked road has brought
Her footsteps to the church; she sees and smiles,
Passes the heaps of earth her childish thought
Had sadden'd at, and enters the dim aisles.

The service for the dead but now had sighed
In echoes through the walls, where all was still
As death again, when Margaret paused beside
The praying knight and lady, not more chill
Or hard than some who make a mock at prayer,
And seem to live, unknowing of true life;
Perhaps she thought of this—she who stood there—
A child unmothered, and a banished wife.

Maybe she did, as sitting in pale sheen
Of summer beauty on the altar stair,
White with the season's heat, too fierce and keen,
She wept unconscious tears, while on her hair
A rainbow played, which might be thought to owe
The painted glass above its birth and place;—
But who can tell who never saw such glow
Of light with clouds contending on a face?

Or did she ponder on the end of things,
And think how in this place her eager soul—
Seeking to flutter upwards on weak wings—
Was ever beaten back? Or does the roll
Of surging thoughts which after that uprose
Rebellious, not alone against the piles
Of superstition, still about her close
When labour leaves her sad and free at whiles?

Perhaps she thinks upon her mortal life,—
Its light extinguished on a sultry noon,—
The sap still rising plenteous, warm, and rife,
With darkness spreading over all so soon;
Her woman's tragedy all, all play'd out,
The players each unmasked, and all subsiding
From some heroic measure, till no doubt,
No hope, no phantasy, is left abiding.

To fail in love, to love and lose, is still
The tragedy of woman; not by death,
Death cannot utterly destroy and kill
As doubt like rust, slow eating into faith.
For what is death to faithful hearts, but some
High shrine in which their hopes are surely kept—
Where tender memories can find a home
Where breath of doubt or change has never swept.

Maybe her yearning thoughts recast a scene
From out the past,—her mother as a bride—
Radiant, but tearful, crownless, though the queen
Of the fond heart then beating at her side,—
Come, in no robes of state, to be anointed,
But taking, in the boldness of her youth,
The oaths of which it had not been appointed
That coming seasons should attest the truth;—

A furtive marriage, sealed in wilful haste;
So bearing from its earliest hour, it seemed,
The fatal stamp of things doomed not to last—
Febrile impatience. Had she, Margaret, dreamed
All this, and that she heard while sitting there
The sound of ghostly joy-bells calling, ringing,
"Come out through that dim porch into the air.
Where violets upon the graves are springing?"

And if she had, did not a keen pang shoot
Adown her, thinking that of this high day
The weary life within her was the fruit?
She may have dreamed so, felt so, and she may
Have known that that rejoicing marriage peal
Ushered in sorrow—but she could not know
How sounds far off for her had boded weal,
Which to the ears that heard them told but woe.

Here in impatience, and in suffering haste,
As Margaret sate and mused, how could she see
That in a field death's lightning had laid waste,
A rose had blossomed, which in time should be
To her a talisman,—bringing sweet peace
And promise to her soul, patience and meekness,
And, bidding all her doubts and strivings cease,
Support her in her unborn pain and weakness?

But sounds far off! What sounds beneath high heaven
Were those which in the old east-county town
Broke the still air what time the joy-bells seven
Shook from the belfry their high music down?
It was a bell, too, fretting the strained ear
At intervals far-parted,—a deep bell
Which knocked upon the heart,—then paused in fear
Of its own message, for—it was a knell.

A woman heard it, bowed upon her knees
Before a picture whose mild eyes looked down
And seemed to bless her; like a mighty breeze
Her passion shook her, as the fair renown,
The lovingness, and ruth of the dead man
Bore full upon her, and her fallen head,
Her helpless arms, and cheek so thin and wan,
Said for her what no tongue has ever said.

Hers was a dry and hollow-eyed despair;
Oh, God! how near her sounds that tolling bell!
She lifts the haggard face he thought so fair
And gazes on the picture. Like a spell
It masters her,—the gentle eyes look down,
Still gentle,—is it soft reproach she reads?
She dares not meet it. Cease! that bell will drown
Soul, sense, and reason, till in vain it pleads.

But patience, patience; still those gentle eyes,
She knows they are upon her, and keeps down
The stormy gusts of passion as they rise, [frown.
Shunning their light as she would shun God's
And "patience, patience," murmuring as she kneels,
And lifts up trembling hands in broken prayer,—
A sort of patience answers her appeals,—
A sort of hope does battle with despair.

She rises slowly. Hah! that bell so near,
It seems to strike at her,—but still she goes
With faltering steps, and still without a tear,
To where entwined in sleep her babes repose.
Unwreathing them, she bears her orphan boy
Away with her as softly as she may,—
A tear is on his cheek! Oh, cruel joy!
She stooped to kiss, and washed the tear away.

Her flood had broken loose, and poured amain
When yet once more beside those pictured eyes
She knelt, and met them through the blinding rain,
With no rebellious madness to disguise.
There kneeling with her child upon her hands,
And shaking, as she knelt, from sole to crown,
She swore to rear him in the holy bands
Imposed by his dead father's fair renown.

The wondering child looked up at her with awe
And question in his eyes; he had not seen
The working of the great stern human law
Of love and woe since he on earth had been.
But looking at the shadowed face in dread, [heart
And listening to the prayer, the young child's
Grew big—with solemn thoughts so early fed—
And in her yearnings bore unconscious part.

So as the days wore on, the faithful wife,
Whom Death had failed to widow, in this place
Took silent counsel, while her children's life
Expanded still before their father's face.
'Twas here they prayed, and here they tottering came
With the first roses; here the wished-for prize
Was dealt them, and here, too, they turned in shame,
When haply they had erred, from those mild eyes.

Oh, heart of woman, so upheld by love!
And heart of wife by love so beaten down!
One love beneath thee, and one love above,
Lifting thy feet, and pressing on thy crown.
Art thou not crushed, poor heart, by sore constraint
Of meeting love? Nay, she was not forsaken,
Her footsteps on the way seemed never faint,
She never swerved from off the road once taken.

Her children were not fatherless; for them
The dead man living in the mother's heart,
Remained a pow'r and presence,—the quick stem
Of many budding graces. As the part
His spirit played through hers was far above
A mortal's, so from out the great ideal
He grew to, recreated by her love,—
Sprang virtues in his son both great and real.

And so it fell out that the same bell told
A good man dead, a better man to come;
One whom aspiring thoughts would render bold,
And loving labour faithful; who for some
More wayward spirits would bring health and cheer,
Teach them to walk the highways of the soul,
To shun its treacherous by-ways, and to steer
With even step to an appointed goal.

The sun is setting, and the rainbow beams
Pour through the window of that chancel grey
Where Margaret sits among the tombs, and dreams
Her troubled dreams, and wishes for the day.
She who so loves the light,—will none arise
To light her wanderings with a welcome ray?
Now the sun sets; she starts, looks round, and sighs,
Murmurs farewell; and passes on her way.

Sick and fevered, stretch'd upon a bed,
  Feebly moaning with the sharp unrest,
And the throbbing anguish of a head
  By the fiends of phantasy possest,—
Julia lay, and held with death a strife,
  Wherein the passing hours were lost, and fell
Like stitches dropped from off the woof of life,
  Leaving a gap for ever; it was well;
A past and future for such pangs had been
Too much for Julia's feeble flesh, I ween.

Days in, days out, the raging fever dried
  The source of life, and in the darkened room
The plaintive eyes, all sleep, all rest denied,
  Followed the figures flitting through the gloom;
Beheld their motions with a glimmering hope
  Of change, or in impatience and blind fear
Saw them about the twilight precincts grope,
  Or with remedial tortures drawing near.
While ever by her pillow, with hushed breath,
Margaret, still hovering, strove to outwatch death.

Margaret, and one besides; that one a woman,
Who was of those who live for very love
'Midst objects most unlovely, and with human,
Or superhuman pity, rise above
The senses' vain recoils; whose patient eyes—
Used to the life-school of our suffering nature—
Can see its bruises bar'd without surprise;
Who counted not as mean the meanest creature
Which only had a body that could feel:
These two kept watch and ward for Julia's weal.

Hard had she struggled ere the fell disease
Had laid her low; and as a child, who thinks
He shirks the danger he no longer sees [blinks,—
Through his closed eyes, yet trembles as he
So had she tried to cheat the foe; and rose,
After a night of anguish, to heap on
Garments her faltering fingers could not close;
Then dizzy—half her labour still undone—
Clutching her glass, she bore it to the ground,
And lay with all the fragments scatter'd round.

Poor Julia!—light, vain Julia! Curious eyes
Behind the penetralia of your spells
And little mystic charms, are made too wise;
The sleeping sentinel no more repels
The glances challenging the faded locks
Which scantly cover the defenceless head;
Th' unfinish'd rose upon her cheek which mocks
The pinch'd lips' whiteness! Lay her on her bed;
See and say no more till love has been
Before you, and has made all fair and clean.

Margaret's hands about her, Margaret's eyes,
With a veil of tender mist before them,
Pass all over, seeing in such wise
As we all see weaknesses when o'er them
Death has dropp'd his pall; what tears were spared
If we could see them earlier thus! So days
And weeks past on, while Margaret scarcely dared
To hope, but watched and waited, with mild ways
And soothing words, the fever mounting higher,
And threat'ning Julia as with death by fire.

The fever reached its height; it was without,
A blank, cold day of wintry spring; within
All days had been alike while the dread doubt
Was pending, and they straining hard to win
A step upon the hungry death which waited
And watched beside them; every hour was gain,—
But still that raging fever unabated!
The doctor! "Hold the arm, and bare the vein,"
He said. One held it, and the hot, red tide
Flowed out, and let the throbbing pulse subside.

Then she lay helpless, but the parting sun
Left her still holding on her feeble breath;
Then deeper darkness fell, and night wore on,—
And she had won another day from death.
And gliding to and fro, the noiseless twain—
Pale Margaret and the Sister—ministered
Throughout the night, and felt it not in vain,
And were by hope to stronger effort spurred;
And when the still, small hours of morning fell,
They found her calm, and knew that all was well.

In the dim chamber those two women sate
In watchful silence; but in Margaret's brain
The busy thoughts which have been quelled of late
Bestir themselves, now lightened of the strain.
She thinks upon her fellow-watcher there—
That woman with the dark, dim-sighted eyes—
With cheek so swart and pallid, frame so spare,
Who sleep and rest to eyes and frame denies
Of her own will; and if it be to gain
Sweet peace,—her labour would not seem in vain.

And then she wondered, thinking all the while
How little help from labour she had found
In her heart-sickness, if that placid smile
Came of a hope more sure, a faith more sound
Than any she had won in all her strife;
And as she looked, that woman grew to be
A marvel to her; and of that strange life
She longed to learn the secret, and to see
How, scorning the desire of heart and eyes
And all weak longings, she had found the prize.

Not waking, and scarce sleeping, Julia lay
Unconscious of their gentle offices;
But hope grew stronger with the dawning day.
And meaning glances full of prophecies
Of healing were passed over her; but still
One restless heart was unappeased,—a shade
Darker than sorrow wrapped it, as the chill
Grey dawn crept in and made the candles fade
And Margaret, in a sudden whisper, said:
"Say, were you driven to this course, or led?"

The sister answered, "I have vowed a vow,
I am no more my own; our holy church
Has mark'd a path for me, and I have now
Only to tread it humbly,—not to search."
And Margaret bowed her head, but to her heart
She said, "I see that here 'tis not true faith
Which nerves this woman for her martyr's part,
Or does withhold her soul from stagnant death,
But living love kindling dead faith, they rise
Together in one flame of sacrifice.

And Margaret, to make sure, came yet again,
And said, "I pray you, Sister, tell me now,
Seeing a body sick, a soul in pain,
Do you turn in and think upon your vow?"
She answered her, "I think no more than they
Who raise a child that falls beneath a wheel;
But I am blest, my road being cast that way
Where there are tears to dry, and wounds to heal."
Then Margaret thought, "pure love is like pure gold,
Which, beaten out, could all the world enfold."

And following her still with eyes and thought,
As she—the Sister—on her work intent,
Crept ever to and fro, and noiseless wrought
With heart, and hand, and purpose, as she went,
Margaret recalled to mind the sacrifice
Of the first brothers born upon the earth—
How Abel's was accepted of the skies,
And Cain's was set at nought as nothing worth;
For that while Abel's had warm life from God,
Cain's had sprung cold and dead from out the sod.

And as the rapid thoughts came flowing in
  Like a Nile-flood, enriching all her soul,
She saw at length how she had failed to win
  The blessing she had sought, and that her whole
Past life had been a struggle to press on
  Upon a blind and barren path, and how
Her hope had been in dead fruits hardly won
  From the dry dust of toil; "And even now,"
She said, "how can I bring the right oblation?
For life and love come not by observation."

She drooped her head and laid it on her knees,
  Closing her senses up from sound and sight;
Then seemed to hear a voice whose words were these:
  "Unto the upright there ariseth light—
Light in the darkness." Then her soul was moved,
  As leaven all at work within her breast,
And Margaret prayed a prayer by God approved,—
  For strength to put that promise to the test;
"'Upright' in heart and life, in thought and will,
May I the terms of covenant fulfil!"

She thought upon her angry Past,—her pride,
Impatience, and self-seeking, and the whole
Full tide of sin which feeds the clouds that hide
The sun of Heaven from the erring soul,
Nor wondered at her long and hungry need
Of light;—how love the Good we do not know?
How know it till we see it clothed in deed?
To love and do it, is to meet the glow
Of Heaven full in face;—Truth in this light
Is Faith—the prize assured to the "Upright."

She saw it all;—the doubt which wrapped her soul
Seemed cleft in twain as by a sword of fire;
"Upright!" her dazzled thought embraced the whole
Full meaning of the word, and mounted higher
Towards the celestial Good, the absolute True,
Than ever it had mounted till this hour;
The soul's relation to her God gleamed through
The darkness: as we stand towards that Power
Which burns on all alike in Love, not ire,
We must be bright, or blackened in the fire.

She saw it all, and cried:—"Let me away
From sin and self!—we leave undone our part,
Nor write the good with which we overlay
Our lives upon the tables of our heart.
Our being is at war, and hence our sight,
Dimmed as with smoke, when if the Law Divine
Lived both in heart and life, it would give light
Like that which made the face of Moses shine;
"Upright" towards God—leave off to search the
For inmost truth.—She started at a sound— [ground

A low moan,—it was Julia; with a light
Of dawning recognition in her eyes,
Half raised upon her elbow, her dim sight
Gath'ring in details with a vague surprise,
She lay, and pointed with a trembling hand
To the strange figure standing in the gloom;
While Margaret, soothing, made her understand
She was at home, this chamber her own room;
That she was sick, but, lovingly attended,
Her sickness soon would further be amended.

In vain; the poor weak trembler could not be
  Assured; her conscious weakness, all around
Told of a sickness unto death, which she
  Might yet succumb to if no help were found.
And as this thought grew clearer, Julia felt
  A torment of unutterable dread,
And sudden strength came to her, and she knelt,
  And writhed, and tossed her arms above her head;
And Margaret, holding on, felt a warm flood
Bathing her hand. Ah, heav'n! it was life-blood.

There came a direful moment; one of doubt,
  Of panic, and disorder; Julia's terror
Was working for her swift destruction out,
  By making faltering hands proceed in error;
A direful moment, when those women heard
  The beating of their two hearts over all;
Just in that moment Margaret's sense was stirred
  By something heard without,—a known foot-fall,
As that strong step, so equal in its beat,
Came ever nearer up the silent street.

It was a thought of lightning; Margaret threw
One glance behind her in her swift retreat,
Then feeling not the steps beneath her, flew
Adown them, and unbarred the door, to meet,
To meet and stop the strong man on his way,—
She knew his calling was to heal;—he came,
He saw her beckoning to him through the grey
Mist of the morning;—spirit, or fair dame,
What mattered it to him? If any said
"Help, help!" he blindly followed where they led.

Back to the chamber whence she came, again
She turned, he following closely as he could
The steps which mounted quick and soft as rain
High up; one breathless moment, and they stood
Together by the dying woman's side;
The limb half-bandaged, and the sick'ning fear
Merging in stupor, bed and bandage dyed
With the red current of her life,—all here
Spoke plain as plainest speech. "Help, help!" it
"And pause not, or the woman will be dead." [said,

He stood there firm and gentle, in the power
And ripeness of his manhood, with the breath
Of morning still about him; fruit and flower
Together seemed to grow with him, and death
To quail as he drew near; so full of life, [seemed,
Of will, and that which moves the will, he
His nature was so plenteous, strong, and rife,
Such energy of being in him teemed,—
His work ere he had touched it was begun,
And the strong winner knew not how be won.

A few brief motions, an assuring word,
And all was silent, with the deep, intense
Hush of expectancy; unseen, unheard,
The even heart-beats which were bearing thence
A priceless gift; while fix'd, grown to the spot,
The women waited as the minutes went,
And watched the working of the unknown plot
With fearful eyes upon the worker bent,—
And saw him plenish from his own the drain
Of Julia's life-blood through the open vein.

Ah, Julia, poor vain Julia!—what rich stream
Is flowing in where late that feeble tide
Of yours was sleeping; comes there no supreme
Knowledge of all that you have been denied
With this irruption? And the life called back,
Does it not shrink in thinking at what cost?
How the great heart which sends such help may lack
The power to succour others, too much lost
In thee,—and how, to save thee, useless one,
Some worthier work may haply stand undone?

Nor she, nor he, so reckoned; Julia felt
Life stirring at her heart, and knew no more;
While he, the strong man at her side, still dealt
The quick'ning stream which added to her store,
And watched her with an earnest, tranquil eye,—
A gaze where love of life and science met;—
And then he sighed: "This woman will not die;"
And then upon his arm a hand was set,
And Margaret bade him hold; his cheek was pale,—
The strong man had forgot his strength could fail.

The goal was reached, the life was saved,—he turned
To meet the grave sweet face of Margarét;
He had been less than man if he had spurned
The warning of such eyes, nor owned the debt.
And when he went, she laid in his her palm,
And looking straightly in his face he read
In hers her soul's contentment, wise and calm,
Deep and full; and scarce a word was said,
Ere she went back to guard the life just won
So bravely for her by the widow's son.

A widow's only son, Raymond his name,—
The Sister saw him oft, and knew him well;
God's sunshine, his fair face, and fairer fame,
In the foul purlieus where the wretched dwell,
Were often their sole champions, all the light
That reached them from this world, or pierced from heaven;
So said the Sister, who would still recite
In coming days, when Julia drew more even
And longer breath, the deeds which had been done
By him she loved to call the "widow's son."

And further onwards, when in pregnant speech
Of Raymond's lips she heard his mother named,
Margaret would think how good it was to teach
And train up sons who should not make ashamed
The high hopes which the woman's weaker brain
And hand so feebly execute. "So then,"
She said, "the highest that we can attain
Is to be faithful mothers of brave men."
But listening now or dreaming, there were sown
Some seeds of life for her before unknown.

She loved to hear of that wise woman, she
So prosperous in her labour in the field
Of woman's fairest promise, nor could see
Unmoved for her, in Raymond's life revealed
The richness of her harvest; and she prest
Him still with questions of her life, her state,
Her air, her voice, what books she loved the best;
We all love details of the rich and great,
And Margaret held the women who gave birth
To noble sons the richest of the earth.

And sometimes Raymond told her of another,
A little sister, who had often made
Her hopes and chances over to her brother,
And on the altar of his life had laid
A part of hers;—a man for his career
Must needs be well-appointed; while a girl
Unlearned has but a homelier path to steer,
A man may be uprooted in the whirl
Of life; and Margaret at these times would sit
And feel her soul to Raymond's sister-knit.

And thinking of the riches of these others,
She, too, felt richer in her narrow sphere;
Not so far off her seemed the joy of mothers,
She almost tasted it, and seemed to hear
The whispered thoughts of sisters, scarcely uttered
So close their converse, yet so fully known;
And then about her heart a new joy fluttered,—
A joy she knew for theirs, but felt her own—
In thinking of a brother, strong and stable,
And pure as any knight of olden fable.

She dwelt upon this picture with fond care, [ness;
And touched, and filled it in with much complete-
Her woman's taste for worship helped her there,
Teaching her hand its vigour and its sweetness.
'Twas happiness to quit yourself, and see,
Through eyes more blest and tender than your own,
How great, true, loving, wise, a man might be,
Who, to your eyes, might ever bide unknown,
Or, seen unaided by such warm attraction,
Be rated only as a pure abstraction.

And wealth more tangible had been brought back
To Margaret from the grave; rich as she felt,
It had gone very hard with her to lack
The face on which her eyes so long had dwelt;
For Julia, with the shadow of that death
Lingering about her, in these early days,
Sitting beside the hearth, pale as the wraith
Of her own self, unconsciously repays
To Margaret all her care, being grown more dear
Since pain of death and parting had been near.

And sitting by her, writing all the day,
Or tending her, no labour seemed to irk;
She wondered at the cold life past away,
And singing, in the pauses of her work,
Old songs she used to love in days gone by,
She woke long silent echoes of young years,
Echoes that sounded still so clear, so nigh,
They startled her to silence, eke to tears, —
But tears which left the unaccustomed eyes
More soft and beaming for the quick surprise.

Her cup seemed over-full. What did it hold?
It matters not; "the life is more than meat,
The body more than raiment," love than gold;
And Margaret from her window on the street
Looks out to bless the sunshine, bless the shower,
The feet which hurry up and down, the faces,
The voices, sad or cheery, the pale flower,
The evening primrose on the sill, which chases
The hard town aspect from the room, and brings
To her the fulness of this spring of springs.

Yes, looking on its tender leaves spread out
  Against the houses on the shadow side,
Catching the merry beams as golden trout
  Within their web, the whole luxurious tide
Of thought,—the sense of all that wild new birth
  Of joy, life, strength, change, progress, pulsing [through
The heart of the regenerate old earth
  In spring, came to her, till it seemed she grew
And ripened with the rest. Oh mystery
Of life and love! So pause, and let her be.

Pause at the threshold of that inner life,
  That veil we cannot penetrate, and hear
Her read amidst the sparrows' twittering strife,
  Beside the open window, in her clear
Soft alto, words with many meanings freighted,—
  The many phases of eternal Truth—
And see her with that look of one belated
  Upon an unknown path—for such in sooth
She is,—and mark the anxious hopeful glance
Which asks if haply Julia can advance.

She reads the poem of the Hebrew king,
Where its dark seeming has her mind withstood,
And over all the voices of the spring
Her cry is, "Who will show us any good?"
The cold grey doubt, the gloaming which precedes
The night, is threatening her; she shuts the book,
Her hand is on it still; she scarcely heeds
The opening door; but oh! that kindling look
Of Raymond, as he follows with his eyes
The finger in the parted page that lies!

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Quick, sharp, silent as a spark of fire,
That bright look fell upon her ready heart,
And cloven tongues of flame seemed to aspire
And leap towards God and heaven from each part;
She seemed to hear him, Raymond, strong and brave
And single, utter,—tho' he never spoke,—
"That book is wiser than we all, go, crave
More light to read it by." The dawn awoke
Within her then; now,—by whatever way,—
She journeys onward to the perfect day.

And Raymond, from his goings to and fro
Upon the earth, his walking up and down
The broad ways and the alleys, high and low,
Or rich or sordid, of the teeming town,
Would oft, to crown the hot and busy day
With a cool hour of golden rest, turn in
To Julia's house, and find her as she lay
Now in the drawing-room where the distant din
Of the great city through the sun-blinds stole
With a subdued, but still continuous roll.

And there sate Margaret, with her eyes of light,
Her cheek refined by thought, her meteor-smile,
Which flashed and trembled, and past out of sight,
Ere you could note the working of the wile;
She, with the low soft voice, who only spoke
By fits, as others sing, but wrought you then
To a strange sense of ecstasy, and woke
Your soul to quick vibration. Hold! my pen
Does duty now for other ears and eyes,
That drunk her words, and drunk them in this wise.

Cool breezes blown up from the watered street
Through Julia's balcony, where scented flowers
Freighted each passing breath with odours sweet
Of mignonette and stock,—oh, magic hours!
While Julia, faint and faded, felt their charm,
Raymond and Margaret, working man and woman,
Drew from them draughts of heavenly joy, so calm,
So pure, so still, it seemed to pass the human;
And paused to rest as on some holy hill,
And feel the star of their joint lives stand still.

No thought but of the bounteous present time,
No wish but that it should not pass away,
And scarcely that, for, in their summer prime,
A man and woman through the toilsome day,
They were as children in the softened light
Of evening, with vague pictures all around,
And never thought if it could end in night,
Or that the dim horizon might be bound;
To steady a full cup that might o'erflow,
Seemed all that Margaret had been taught of woe.

Well, well; it never ended, never past,—
  This time,—although there came too soon a day
When they were sundered; no, such moments last
  For ever in the souls which own their sway.
But those soft airs of Paradise which blew
  Through Julia's window brought her no new life,
No hope of strength returning; so there grew
  Up thoughts of change, to wage victorious strife
With present bliss,—till with divided heart
Margaret and Julia rose up to depart.

Then Raymond, in his goings to and fro
  Upon the earth, his walking up and down
The broad ways and the alleys, high or low,
  Or rich or sordid, of the teeming town,
Felt in his feet a burning of unrest,
  Felt in his heart a hunger of desire,
Felt as a man who had his soul possest
  In patience till this hour, humble, entire,
Serene,—but who at one wild turn of life
Has lost it in some elemental strife.

What can a woman say of the strong surge
Of passion rising in the heart of man?
Of love so fierce that it is prone to merge,
When baffled, into rage? I say what can
We know of this? 'Tis mostly our weak way
To weep when hurt, and when betrayed to sink;
But how is it with Raymond?—*he* the prey
Of such blind demons? *He* approach the brink
Of folly, thinking that she should depart
Ere he had thought of speaking out his heart?

No, no, not so,—this passion is of grief
Tender as woman's, tho' it lacks the tears
Which give with her the bursting heart relief.
Oh! how the strong can suffer,—what dark fears,
What anguish the spread hands would fain shut out;
How the mind works through all; each scattered thread
Of evidence is caught, and turned about
Within the brain; what is the dismal dread
That tortures him? Is it that some ill bird
Has dropped the fatal sand-corn of a word?

Ay, so it is; a breath—not all of slander—
And which some subtle sense of mystery
Has helped to wing straight home to him, has banned
Her whom he loves, as one no more to be [her,
The type of spotless womanhood for him:
Wise without knowledge, full, sweet, self-contained
As fruit ripe without sun, as grapes that swim
With impressed wine, nay, this no more but stained
With secret sorrow,—worse he could not name,—
But on his own bowed head was written—shame!

True, the strong suffer, but they win the fight;
And morning found him, Raymond, the high-
He with the single eye, so full of light, [hearted,
A conqueror, with many wounds which smarted
But not disabled him; a night of pain
So sharp as this has whitened women's hair,—
And men's too, for that matter,—but in vain
You looked at him for trace of soil or care
When in the early morning through the street
You heard the motived music of his feet.

Now he knew all, nay,—more and less than all,
And infinitely worse; but still he thought
Of Margaret as his day-star, and her fall
From her first heaven, with all its anguish, wrought
A flood of such soft pitying charity
In this man's heart, as washed her shining white.
Margaret—with her pure brow—who could not see
That sin for her had been a passing blight,
Subsiding, purged away, with the salt tears
It should be his to dry through coming years?

And from the love, half-worship, which had gazed
Out of his eyes upon the silent woman,
Shy of itself, admiring and amazed,
There sprung to light a love more deep and human,
Burning with the close heat which mothers know
For children disinherited of nature,
Where unshed tears of pity cause the glow
To strike more keenly home. To this fair stature
Had Raymond's love attained one shining day,
As through the ripening fields he took his way.

The ripple-wrinkled Thames was the bright clue
  Which guided him in quest of the green village
Where Margaret dwelt this while; and he past thro'
  The country spread with fruits of toil and tillage,
By hedgerow thorns with roses crowned, and heard
  The meek, low-nesting lark, high up in air,
Raining her song from out a cloud—wise bird!
  And Raymond saw that all was good and fair,
And felt that all was better than he saw
Through the wild outbirth of eternal law.

On, on, till in the lazy afternoon
  The shrunken Thames lay in his bed asleep,
Curtained by trees; and on by commons, soon
  To see them sprinkled over with white sheep.
On through the field-path to the turning-stile,
  Through which there gleams a garment of light
Haply some maiden pauses there awhile [stuff.
  To dream; for Raymond drawing near enough
Can see the shape of one who idly lingers,
Entwining flowering grasses in her fingers.

He must be near his goal; his rapid course
Has raised his pulses; onward through the trees
He sees thick clustering roofs, and hears the hoarse
Call of the boatman on the summery breeze.
And passing by the maiden, where she stands
Half-hidden by the alder, with her feet
Deep in the unbrowsed grass, her listless hands
Relaxed, he sees her bowed head turned to meet
The little twisting rill which softly presses
His way amongst the moistened water-cresses.

It was a pleasant vision for a day
Like this; and Raymond turned, ere he was gone,
To note again the form so fresh and gay,
Backed by the poppies, and the pale green corn.
A start of glad surprise, some breathless words
Of sudden joy, and he is at her side;
'Tis Margaret, she herself,—no greeting birds
Had been more heedless-happy, or defied
More utterly the world-born, base alloy,
Which comes so oft to mix with human joy.

A sense of something found,—a ripe completeness,
An affluence of being yet unknown,
Pervaded, with a luxury of fitness,
These first bright moments ever past alone.
So much to say and hear; such quick exchange
Of fluttering words;—sure silence had been pain
Up to this time? And then, sudden and strange,
There fell a sort of lull, and each in vain
Sought words to wrap up nothings in, and failed,
Faltered, and reddened—tried again, and paled.

And too self-conscious now to note the tide,—
The ebb and flow of feeling not their own,—
They look'd upon the landscape side by side,
The trouble of each heart to each unknown:
She on the meadow gazed, he on the field,
Till, gathering courage from her sheathéd eyes—
He stole a look at her, and saw revealed
A change unnoted in the first surprise; [wanted,
Which gave him back so much he sought and
The living soul for which his soul had panted.

But here she stood, his pearl-pale Margaret,
  Now glowing with the kisses of the sun;
Her cheek and chin with sun-flecks overset,
  As if the honey-dew above had run
Out of the elder-flowers upon her face.
  White Margaret with this tinting warm and mel-
This little hat turned up with wilful grace, [low,
  And garlanded with flowers, red and yellow,—
Was she thus radiant grown? His big heart yearned
With tearful tenderness as Margaret turned.

Turned on his face a timid glance, and showing
  The path which led towards home, was moving
    thence,
When Raymond caught her hand, and, half unknowing
  Of what he said, pressed on her the immense
Wealth of his honest love; and Margaret bent
  Her head beneath the crushing joy, and both
For some supreme and breathless moments leant
  Upon the stile, silent and trembling, loth
To trouble by a breath the hymn sublime
Of two souls meeting on the shores of time.

And meeting thus each seemed to pass beyond
The close, dim self,—to leap the prison walls
Which shut out light, and feel for once the bond
Which bound them to the universe, and galls
The feeble flesh, a rapture. Living love
Welled up within them, and in its strong flow
Broke down all barriers, below, above,
Around; and joyous in their overthrow
Spread widely out, and, mastering time and sense,
Showed them true life,—full, infinite, intense.

They stood together with averted eyes,
Filled, penetrated, with each other's being,
Not daring to disturb, by looks or sighs,
Or words, however to the thought agreeing,
The infinite consciousness that beating heart
With beating heart they were united here,
Commingled, interfused, no more to part,—
That earth was quick with love, and heaven was near;
And they alive within, with the same light
Which gilds the Eternal city day and night.

And ever after, thinking on this gleam
  Of heaven, they were unable to recall
The steps by which they mounted in their dream,
  Or what at last had hurried on their fall.
There only swam the poppies and the corn
  Before them, and the alder at their side,
And—strangely, tho' their glances were withdrawn—
  The waving grass and hemlocks spreading wide
Behind them, with the dandelions seen
Floating their bubbles everywhere between.

Whence came that ghostly memory ?—what awoke
  That shade of a dead love, and brought it here
Trailing its cerements and its broken yolk,
  And making Margaret's heart stand still for fear?
So feeble in its life, how should it rise
  To vex her in its death,—if death indeed
Be other than a change of outward guise,
  Conforming with a change of inward need?
No matter: through some sense as through a gate
It stole, and met her as an angry Fate.

A scent, a sound, a shimmer of the sun
  Upon a flower—on some such line it sped,
And Margaret dwelt in Time again, as one
  Lone entity,—the golden vision fled!
And Raymond felt her turn herself about,
  And saw the parted lips, which closed again
Without a sound; and thought he read the doubt
  Which tortured her, and felt the iron pain
Enter his soul thro' hers, but dared not speak;
The strong man for another's sake was weak.

And she, too self-absorb'd to see, to hear,
  Was wandering on the homeward path away,
With pale set lips, and nostril arch'd by fear
  Of what she should, and what she dared not say;
While on her lingering steps, which might have
      turned
  At any moment in a sudden start
Of courage, Raymond followed; for he burned
  To help her, and to show her all his heart;
Then at her side he whispered calmly, clearly:
"Margaret, I know all, *all*—I love you dearly."

A soft and sidelong glance she only stole
At Raymond's face, and Raymond inly felt
Bathed in it as in tears, while all his soul
Over her cureless sorrow seemed to melt.
But that one searching glance had taken in
The pain suppressed in Raymond's heart,
Unknowing that the burning thought of sin
Undreamed by her, had moved him in this wise;
And thus her struggling courage was thrown back,
And mute again they trod the foot-worn track.

Before the door they paused; he drew her hand
In his, and turned to hers his pleading face.
Would she now speak? Or had the deep eyes scanned
Once more those honest lines, and found the trace
Of feelings unexplained which struck her dumb?
Not so, her lips are moving with the breath
Which shall make words,—she speaks,—the truth will come;
But he—to hear *that* from her lips were death—
He cannot bear it; "Heart of mine! no more,
In pity!" So they entered at the door.

And thus they parted when the twilight fell;
And thus they met again, to know again
The self-same struggle, and to feel the spell—
The tranquil fulness drowning sense of pain,
And care and thought itself, in the high bliss
And bounty of each other's presence; so
The days wore on; and they must part from this
Green village of the Thames, on which a glow
Of passionate remembrance still would hover,
Till the freed soul should all its past recover.

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The old familiar street, th' unfading flowers—
Which had for Julia that unbroken being
Which kings have for the state; come sun, come showers,
The living following on the dead—none seeing
The gap between them; yes, the house, the faces,
That greeted them within it, Julia grown
Her cheerful self again, with harmless graces
And beauty airs, feeble and autumn-blown;
Much was the same, and Raymond came and went
And Margaret seemed, and Julia was, content.

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And one still evening in the golden gloom
Of early twilight as they sate,— the twain
Feeling each other's presence fill the room
Like heavy perfume, or a thrilling strain
Of music; Julia, eyeing them, uprose·
To pluck with haste a garland from her bower,
Myrtle and jasmine, and exulting chose
A branch of orange breaking into flower;
Then wreathing, threw them in her wanton freak
On Margaret's brow,—and left the two to speak.

They did *not* speak at first; the twilight fell
On the pale garland, over the fair face;
And Raymond gazed at both, and felt the swell
Of thoughts with which his tongue could keep no pace;
While Margaret, looking up with that strange glance,
So piteous in its vigilance, took heed
Of every moving muscle that perchance
Might help her Raymond's secret thought to read.
Till slowly travelling on, the wistful eyes
Drooped their veiled lids, and rested, sad and wise.

She felt a hand pressed lightly on her head
As if in blessing, and she heard a voice,
A gentle voice, which trembled as it said,
"Mine, only mine! Look forward and rejoice!"
But the dumb spirit was on Margaret now,
And Julia, entering, sees her cold joined hands
Crushing the flowers dethroned from her brow;
And Raymond, blind and patient where he stands,
Pouring forth words which enter keen as steel
Into the wounds he would have died to heal.

That night in Margaret's chamber there was fought
One of those Armageddons of the soul,—
A battle where opposing powers are brought
Banded and marshalled 'neath the strong control
Of circumstance at war with the true life
And being of the heart. The night wore on,
And still there was no end to the wild strife;
At times upon her knees, all pale and wan,
Then wandering restless up and down the room,
Now towards the light, anon into the gloom.

Proud and humble, trembling and despairing,—
With such a sense of joy as can be known
Only to those who love, and a high daring
Which feared no torture for herself alone,—
But joy existing only as a sense—
A sense of something to be wholly lost,—
And courage but to heighten the intense
Pain of a conflict where, at any cost,
The Right must triumph; this she felt, and wept—
And so the battle raged while others slept.

What had she for her dower? Love, love alone!
Love grew beneath his glance! That clean right hand
Of Raymond's, dare she meet it with her own,
On which there tightened still a broken band?
And should the shield of Raymond's spotless name
Be spread between her and the world's reproof—
He more and more familiar with its blame,
She cowering ever more and more aloof?
No, no! But then the pain which he must share,
She said—and lost all heart to do or dare.

"The pain—*that* pain—will pass," she thought again;
"Am I so peerless that he will not find
Another love on whom he need not rain
Such tender pity as has made him blind?
Pain, pain! It is the product of a life
Misguided, and, approaching him too near,
Some seeds of the wild crop must spring up rife,
Where only fruits of promise should appear.
Pain!—what is that which now he feels, and fain
Would keep from me, an if it be not pain?"

She stood within the circle of the light;
Strong dark shadows drawn across her face
Only made the thoughtful eyes more bright,
Only brought out lines of perfect grace.
But the eyes which looked upon the glare
Saw but darkness, and the soul belated
Made her, in her cloudy, blank despair,
Dreadful in the beauty which she hated:
"For," she said, "this yearning heart of mine
Dwells within a desecrated shrine."

Her spirit rose up with the day; she saw
That light was still in heaven, where she only
Must seek it from this hour, whence learn to draw
The strength that she would need—*strength for the lonely.*
Yes, it must be so! She could never see
His grand high head abated to her measure;
A royal love like hers, how should it be
The slave of selfish ends or earthly pleasure?
Time can but sunder what it can abate;
True love is patient, and can dare to wait.

"Raymond," she wrote—and with so firm a hand
That others seeing her had said that she
Was calm; she thought so too, for she had planned
Her whole existence as it was to be
In the still future,—"Raymond, I have never
Told you in words how all my heart is yours,
But now when love decrees that we must sever,
Love—mine for you, O Raymond—asks, adjures
That you will know it for a thing the breath
Will never carry with it unto death.

"I ask you to believe this, O beloved;
Because, while I must deal you present pain
I wish your spirit to be gently moved
By thoughts which, while they grieve you, will sustain.
I love you, then, and bid you ask your heart,
Your own true heart, what these true words may mean:
But, howsoever loving, we must part,—
I cannot wed you; all our past has been
So differently fashioned, that to mate
Fitly with you, I must be re-create.

"I know that you will mourn me, that your whole
Strong nature will awhile be rudely shaken;
Your love is of the stature of your soul,
And has of my deserts no measure taken.
But, Raymond, it is better we should bear
A wrench, a sorrow, cost us what it may,—
That we can dare to speak of, than to share
A knowledge we must hide from light of day.
Taught of your mother,—trained without the rod,
Do not despise a woman taught of God!

"Nay, these are cruel words, I take them back,—
I know not how they fell from me in sooth,
But that the pain I suffer, like the rack,
Wrings cries and falsehood out along with truth.
But do not think my pangs are what they seem
From what I say,—it had been worth them all,
Beloved, to know you only in a dream,
Which for my future joy I could recall.
Think not that any grief or pain undue
Can ever reach my heart through love of you.

"You brought a blessing with you when you came,—
That blessing will endure unto the end;
Of all the suffering souls that love your name
None has a deeper right to call you friend.
And when in coming days we can forget
That we have sighed for earthly bonds still dearer,
That in our noon of life when first we met
Our souls were hungry to be pressing nearer,
Then may we yet awhile in friendship dwell,
Ere we go hence,—till then, farewell, farewell!"

The doubt was torture, keener far than any
She yet had known; the weary sleepless brain
Called on at once to re-adjust the many
Points in the contest, and to fight again
The battle against hope, and joy, and love,—
His hope, and joy, and love too, with her own;
It was too much—her strength gave way—she strove
In vain to settle it;—a feeble moan
For help broke from her; fainting, forced to wait,
She almost fell, like Mercy, at the gate.

"Margaret!"—"Raymond!" He was at her side;
They spoke each other's names in one same breath;
While, surging up, the blood rose like a tide
To Margaret's brow, then left her pale as death.
Greatheart was come! Some moments past she would
Have fled from him, but now she leant her weight
With her two hands upon his arm, and stood
Appealing to his strength; her fate, his fate,
He should decide. Her tongue was loosed, thoughts glowed
Into quick speech at last,—the torrent flowed.

The fountain of long pent-up words uprose,
Broken by sobs, but strong, and full, and clear;
And Raymond, who the very truth now knows—
Dashes from each blue honest eye a tear.
"God's name be praised on earth!" was all he said;
But Margaret saw that a worse fear had been
With lesser knowledge, and she bowed her head
Before the man with hands and heart so clean,
Who, loving, would have shared with the world's blame
The ceaseless anguish of repentant shame.

He paused a moment; then he said again:
"Margaret, *my* Margaret, you have been sore pressed,
But not one struggle can have been in vain;
And all are over now,—you have found rest.
I know you for my own, yea, by the might
Of love which shall protect you by God's grace;
What God and man allow, that is the right!"
But all the poet flashed up in her face
As she made answer, "Oh, that, like the dove,
I could have lived and died true to one love!"

"My proud and dainty Margaret," yet once more
Said Raymond, with a look that seemed to shine,
Cleaving their hearts as light,—"you never bore
Another in the place that now is mine:
The troth you will exchange with me you never
Have broken with another; that false tie
Which left you twain in law, in name, or ever
Your road divided,—that was not the high
Type of the inmost mystery of life—
Duality in union—man and wife."

"Tried, sinless, free! What, asking still for more?
I said that you were dainty! For my sake
Look up, my pearl, and know that on this shore—
This muddy shore of Time—who dwells must take
The evil semblance with the good, and seek
In puny microcosms of Art alone
To find the Perfect; sight is here too weak,
Its field too narrow—" There the gentle tone
Was lost to me; I only heard their feet
Pacing in concert up the silent street.

The morning air her throbbing pulse that quelled,
The sweet concerted movement, the strong arm
Restraining while it guided and upheld,
The eye so resolute, the voice so calm,—
These were as key-notes to a tonic chord
Preluding to a new Psalm of her Soul,
Where subtle discords which had lately warred
Were now resolv'd and cleared up in a whole,
Of which the time was measured by the beat
Of Raymond's firm and ever-ready feet.

Walk on, walk on, together through the haze
Which hangs upon the morning, and displaces
Your still retreating figures from my gaze.
Walk on, walk on, with light upon your faces,
From strength to strength in the increasing glow,
And bless the faint and weary by the way;
Faith can move mountains, love can melt their snow,—
And both together must make endless day.
Henceforward all to Margaret's side who press
Will find a mother in "The Motherless."

THE END.

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